

MISCELLANIES

Of the late ingenious and celebrated

M. ABAUZIT, K

ON

HISTORICAL, THEOLOGICAL,

AND

CRITICAL SUBJECTS.

Translated from the FRENCH,

By E. HARWOOD, D. D.

No ! this age of philosophy will not flow without having produced one true philosopher. I know one, and I freely own, but one ; but what is much more, and which I regard as the highest point of happiness, it is in my own country that he resides : shall I presume to name him, to name him whose true glory it is to have studied to remain almost in obscurity ?
—The wise and modest ABAUZIT.

Nouvelle Heloise, t. iii. p. 5. Edit. Lausanne.

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M D C C L X X I V.

MISCELLANEOUS

THE

HISTORICAL THEOLOGICAL



W. E. HARRISON, D.D.

THE
HISTORICAL THEOLOGICAL
MISCELLANEOUS
OF
W. E. HARRISON, D.D.
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T H E

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE late learned and ingenious author of these miscellaneous productions was deservedly esteemed one of the wisest and best men in *Switzerland*. He courted obscurity ; but it was not in his power to steal through life unnoticed. The celebrated ROUSSEAU, in his *Eloisa*, first announced to the public his distinguished worth as a philosopher and a man of singularly good sense, The exalted idea which this excellent judge of literary merit entertained of ABAUZIT's abilities and character, is exhibited in the title. The original, in a short time, passed two editions, which have been well received by the intelligent and judicious ; such only ABAUZIT knew would be his readers. The original is said to be printed at Lon-

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don: it is an honour to us, that every good book abroad, that ridicules anile superstition, and controverts popular absurdities, is printed at LONDON. I must confess that some theological tenets in these papers have not shaken my own faith as to a certain doctrine, which hath lately been much agitated; but there is more learning and genius employed in order to evince and confirm them, than I have ever seen employed by any other writer. About two years ago I published a volume of Dissertations, which experienced a very favourable and candid acceptance, and was translated into German by a learned *Prussian* professor; but after repeated and impartial examination, I see reason still to adhere to the doctrine of my second Dissertation. I wish my ingenious friend, Dr. PRIESTLEY, would answer it, and show the fallacy of my interpretations; for he knows that the world never laid me under obligations to serve any party, and that I am rigidly attached to nothing but to TRUTH. The book I have translated

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lated is not much known in England. French books, on the most paltry and frivolous subjects, French books which are written with a deliberate purpose, not merely to make the Christian religion, but the belief of a God and a future state, the object of banter and derision, are purchased and read with avidity. A good French book is now a rare phenomenon. When I had translated this work, some of my learned friends informed me, that they had heard Sir JOHN PRINGLE, whose universal erudition and knowledge of books are well known, repeatedly mention this volume of *Abauzit* in terms of the highest approbation. Such an illustrious testimony in favour of a writer, who had occupied so many of my hours, imparted to me great satisfaction. The French original was first put into my hands, as an extraordinary book, by my friend HENRY GOODRICKE, Esq. who, by his long residence abroad, is well acquainted with the history of learned men, and the state of the republic of letters on

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the continent, and whose good abilities have done eminent service to the best of causes, the cause of religious liberty. I reaped so much rational pleasure from these miscellaneous papers, that I deemed it an humane and friendly office to communicate the same satisfaction to others. The intelligent reader, I am persuaded, after having given these a candid and attentive perusal, will esteem the hours I have expended on the translation of them not to have been unusefully consumed, and the time he hath bestowed on reading them not to be unprofitably employed. May every success finally crown every generous effort in every region that hath for its great and glorious object the illumination, virtue, liberty, and happiness of mankind! 24 OC 62

Great Russell-street,
Bloomsbury, London,
Jan. 10, 1774.

E. HARWOOD.

M E M O I R S
OF THE
L I F E of the A U T H O R.

THE world undoubtedly expects to find prefixed to the works of M. Abauzit, some particulars of his life : we will endeavour to satisfy the expectation of the reader : we will deliver nothing here but what he said to his friends or wrote with his own hand ; consequently these particulars will be few, the wise Abauzit choosing to say but little of himself.

A nation hath been pronounced happy when centuries have flowed over her without exhibiting to history any interesting and varied scenes : this observation is as true when applied to an individual. The number of years of him whose character we now attempt to delineate is great, the number of the incidents of his life is far from being so ; he was therefore an happy being.

His

His family was descended from an Arabian physician, who was settled at Thoulouse in ~~the~~ the ninth century : it was not noble ; with less modesty, less passion for liberty, it would have rendered itself illustrious ; without studying to do it, our author hath rendered its name highly respectable. He was born at Uzes, on the 11th of November, 1679 ; his father died * in a little time after the birth of his son. His mother, Anne de Ville was subjected to violent persecutions on account of her son †, whom they wanted to force from her in order to educate him in the Roman catholic religion, at the time of the revocation of the edict ‡ of Nantes. She sent him at first to Orange, with a trusty domestic, and from thence into a little village near Die : he could not be concealed here long ; he was brought back to Uzes, and sent to the college. But his mother had imbued his mind with principles contrary to those with which his persecutors wished to inspire him : they obliged her to board him at a Roman catholic's ; she had the courage to carry him off from this situation, and convey him from the researches and

* In 1681.

† M. Abauzit had a younger brother, who experienced the same persecutions as he did, and Geneva in like manner was his asylum. A fatal accident made the operation of the trepan necessary : he felt it all his life. He died at London in 1717.

‡ In 1685.

zeal of his converters. He was obliged to wander a long time among the mountains of Cevennes, changing his asylum every time that his bishop discovered the place of his concealment. They had once invested the house where he was : they put the child in a panier along with some goods on an ass, and by this stratagem he escaped.

I know not by what fatality it is, that the blessings which a prince lavishes upon his people are often lost by being divided, and the severities which he enjoins are farther aggravated in their execution on individuals. In giving so much importance to a child, it seems as if they foresaw that he would one day become a great man.

In the mean time the mother of young Abauzit was confined in the castle of Somieres, where she experienced the most rigorous treatment — but in vain — it was not in their power to constrain her to recall her son, whom she had at last safely lodged in the asylum of Geneva. This lady had a fortitude superior to any persecutions, great acuteness of understanding, a great fund of knowledge, one might even add, that she possessed philosophy, vehement as her zeal was for religion. She often declared, “I would never have my son be of a religion that renders men stupid and wicked.” She judged
of

of doctrines by their relation to morals, and was never attached but to those only which she thought essential to the obligations of morality.

The health of Madame Abauzit did not long bear up against the loss of her liberty: a slow fever threatened her with speedy dissolution; but notwithstanding all the earnest entreaties her physician made to the bishop * of Uzes, he could not obtain from this savage her release from prison. Here she would have ended her life, if an happy incident had not called the commander of the fort to Paris. His brother, who took his place, was as intelligent and humane, as the other was ignorant and brutal; he was penetrated with the signal merit of his prisoner, and warmly interested himself in her fortune: "You wish her to ~~de~~ die here, (so he told the bishop in a letter) but I will not be her executioner." He wrote to the court, and obtained her enlargement, till her health should be re-established. Madame Abauzit, after surmounting a thousand perils, arrived at Geneva, in a dying condition, two years after her son: she had saved some of the wreck of a fortune once considerable, with which she educated

* The court then gave the bishops *lettres de cachet*, signed in blanc, which they afterwards distributed at their pleasure. This was the crook with which these good shepherds brought back their wandering flocks.

young Abauzit, teaching him early by her own example both to dispense with vain superfluity, and to seek for happiness in the culture of his mind and the practice of virtue. He made a very rapid progress through all the sciences: his mind accommodated itself to all with the same facility; but natural philosophy, the mathematics *, and natural history had the greatest charms for him. Consecrated to the study of theology, he at first applied to it with great zeal, but he sought for evidence, and one seldom finds it here: this science was not however sterile in his hands; he often rendered it useful to his friends: he did not neglect the study of the ancient languages, and few persons understood them so thoroughly as he did.

He departed for Holland in 1698; here he saw Bayle, Jurieu, the Basnages. With the first of these great men he cultivated an acquaintance, admired his genius and amazing knowledge. He said afterwards that they had not done justice to Jurieu, and that this fanatic joined to the best cultivated mind the most sprightly imagination. He esteemed the Basnages, and during his whole life cherished the same sentiments for them. If he had been to settle in

* He had an uncle, who was a good mathematician, his name was M. de Fossac; M. Abauzit had one of his dissertations on the construction of logarithms.

Holland, it would have been at Rotterdam* where these literati lived, and which he would have chosen for his asylum. He passed into England; here the czar then was: it was at the time that marshal Tallard was negotiating the treaty of partition between France and the house of Austria. Here, left to himself, at an age in which other men pursue only pleasure, Abauzit meditated on the cause of those revolutions which this state had experienced, investigated the sources of the public prosperity, and sometimes he found them in laws dictated by temporary circumstances, in those which the interference of clashing and opposite interests produced — laws oftentimes wiser than their authors ever intended to render them: he thought however that the happiness of this people was less the effect of its laws than of its manners.

* Here he was witness of a kind of farce, which a profelyte to the Protestant religion exhibited in concert with professor Jurieu. It was then the custom for those that quitted the Romish religion to give their reasons to the public. The man mounted a chair, and addressing himself to an host which he held in his hand, he said to it, "If thou art a God, defend thyself; if thou art nothing but a vile piece of paste, I may without sin crumble thee to pieces and trample thee under my feet:" upon which he gave it a hearty squeeze, and sent it going in a thousand small fragments among the multitude. Bayle and Abauzit laughed heartily at this ridiculous scene; and the pleasantry of this philosopher was, in some measure, the origin of those shameful quarrels which he had some time after with the professor.

At

At London he was acquainted with St. Evremond, and this amiable old gentleman, who well knew mankind, was sensible of the singular merit of Abauzit : he presaged that he, who in his youth merited the esteem of the old, would in his mature age merit the admiration of the intelligent, and the veneration of the virtuous. Here he saw Sir Isaac Newton, with whom he afterwards maintained an epistolary correspondence, in which Sir Isaac pays him this compliment, which, coming from so great a man, redounds highly to his honour, *You are a very fit person to judge between Leibnitz and me.*

He was the friend of Mr. John Perry, an English engineer, who soon afterwards went to Russia, to second the vast designs of czar Peter I. William III. ordered Michael le Vassor* to propose to him very advantageous offers in order to attach him to his person ; these he declined : by accepting them, he must have settled in England, and his filial piety and tenderness for his mother recalled him to Geneva, where he arrived by the way of Holland and Germany. He only made a few excursions in Switzerland, but each of these contributed to enrich natural history with new observations : he visited the

* Author of the History of Lewis XIII. and at that time sub-preceptor to the duke of Gloucester, queen Anne's son.

ice houses of Savoy, and took a drawing of them: he never went back into France: the persecutions he had experienced in his childhood had inspired him, methinks, with a greater dread of the French government than he ought reasonably to have cherished. These same precautions, together with his philosophy, had rendered Popery detestable to him; he militated against it with pleasure and success: the interests, the honour of Protestants, were ever most dear to him. He lost his mother in 1726. To the hour of her death they had ever been happy in one another: never was a mother more affectionately beloved than she was; never was a son more tenderly regarded than he was. His sorrow was at first extreme; time softened it into a gentle melancholy. It was in this year that the little council of the republic presented him with the privileges and freedom of a citizen: this was an honour, and his modesty would have refused it, could he have done it. He was importuned to fill a professor's chair then vacant, but he would only accept the place of librarian. He gave up all the emoluments * arising from this department: he feared

* This his disinterestedness appears so much the more amiable, as he was not rich. He had in the English funds 1500 pounds, on the establishment of the old annuities: but his mother's family, who had obligations to that of M. Abauzit, constantly paid him a certain annuity:

every thing that might in the least abridge his freedom : liberty was ever his great idol ; he sacrificed his fortune and reputation to it.

We will say nothing of his literary productions which are contained in this volume. We will only mention a few things concerning those which are suppressed, because the progress of science, from the time in which he wrote, renders them comparatively useless : we are not acquainted ourselves with all of them. He devoted his knowledge, his reflections, every thing to friendship, and not to glory. Of those who profited by his knowledge and his researches, few have had the ingenuity, like M. de Mairan, to acknowledge it, and pay him the tribute of their gratitude : I know very well that in so doing they acted agreeably to his wishes, and that he chose to live a stranger to the applauses of the public ; but perhaps it would have been better had they been less com-

M. de Ville, his cousin-german, a wise, modest, and eminently virtuous person, remitted to him every year a fixed sum. M. de Lisle Roy of St. Quintin, lieutenant of the Marechaux de France at Uzes, in marrying Miss de Ville, his only daughter, thought he had contracted the same obligations of his father-in-law, and punctually continued the appointment to M. Abauzit's death. It is agreeable to see the same virtues thus transmitted from one to another in the same family. In return, M. Abauzit named M. de Lisle Roy his sole heir, but he had not time to finish his will.

so modestly of his own, as to hope, that this apparent contradiction would one day be removed, though he himself could not clear it; an incident contributed to induce him to cherish this hope. There was communicated to him, as something mysterious, a mechanical explication of gravity, in which he found only the want of supposing an *original elasticity* in the particles of the fluid imagined to produce gravity. He had not admitted gravity without cause, he could not admit elasticity without cause. Thus a young man, having shown him, more than twenty years before, a piece of mechanism entirely like the other, only exempt from this defect, and whose first principle of motion was out of this material system, he was entirely satisfied with it, and he communicated to him ten years afterwards the explication we have just rehearsed, which he had kept secret till that time. It was his opinion, and he avowed it to us, that all the researches that could be made on this subject, would tend only to confirm the new mechanism; and after his death we found from his collections that he judged it *excellent*.

The following is nearly the manner in which he determined the height of the atmosphere of the earth at the equator. On the surface of the earth, the centrifugal force of the points of the equator is 289 times less than their centripetal force,

force. If one takes the points elevated above this surface, the first of these forces encreases in proportion of the distances to the center, provided we suppose that the revolution is always made in 24 hours in all the height of the atmosphere; and the second diminishes in an inverse ratio of the squares of the distance: at last they become equal, when the distance to the center hath encreased in the proportion of the cube root of 289, which is about $6\frac{1}{4}$. If then our atmosphere revolved with the earth as of a piece with it, and did not experience any sensible pressure from the expansive quality of that celestial subtil fluid, which one must add to the centerpetal force before we make it equal with the centrifugal; those of its particles which would be situated directly upon the equator, at the height of $6\frac{1}{4}$ radii of the earth, would produce neither more nor less effect to approach the earth than remove from it. M. Cassini hath employed the same suppositions, to explain how the surfaces of the heavenly bodies revolve more slowly than they were to do according the rules of Kepler, and the height of the atmosphere was a consequence of it: he found it about 10,000 French leagues*.

Ancient and modern history and geography were very well understood by him. On these

* Memoirs of the Academy, 1735, p. 153.

subjects he was a living library, and one might say, for example, that he knew ancient Greece and Egypt better than the ancient Greeks and ancient Egyptians had known it. All his charts were filled with remarks highly useful to the study of geography*. He had drawn some himself, one particularly of Egypt, another of the lake of Geneva, which last he gave to the duke of Richmond, who engraved it at London. For this nobleman he intended another work, which we cannot find. We have also his chart of Cæsar's passage from Gaul into Great Britain, in which are very learned notes. His Atlas, the Itinerary of Antoninus through all the provinces of his empire, that from Burgidala to Jerusalem, and from Heraclea through Aulona and Rome to Milan, he had filled with remarks. With regard to medals, one could not have imposed upon him by the most perfect imitation of the antiques. He had care-

* Of all the geographers, those whom he esteemed the most were Messieurs de Lisle and Danville. This last was perhaps the only gentleman who, in his map of the Holy Land, had placed Antipatris at some distance from the sea; and M. Abauzit proved the rectitude of this, from a passage in Josephus which was decisive on this head. In this same geographer's map of ancient Italy he discovered a fault which was common to him with all others, which is placing the *Bauta* of the Romans where now *Bonne* in Faucigni is situated. The great road which he makes to pass through Geneva and this little town would only have led to mountains dry and almost inaccessible: according to our author, *Bauta* was the old Anneci.

fully studied the manners and customs of the ancients: these rendered familiar to him the knowledge of inscriptions, and these last enabled him to clear up some doubts which ancient history still leaves us. He could have framed an excellent system of chronology, but he contented himself with correcting the mistakes of the most eminent chronologers*. These sciences,

* I have found a note written with his own hand, which may serve to prove this; it is the following: "In consequence of my remarks, Mr. Newton altered his opinion: he placed the eclipse, observed by Thales in the year before Christ 585, as his *Opera Postuma*, published by Castiglione, shew. Long after M. des Vignoles had published his Chronology, I wrote to him that I espoused the date of Eudamus the Greek, followed by the *History of Astronomy* and by Pliny, namely, the fourth year of the 48th Olympiad, which answers to the year 585, in which year, on the 28th of May, there was an eclipse of the sun more than total, according to the tables of Lansberge for the meridian of Smyrna or Ephesus; and that the calculation was still more exact, for the *High Halys*, which separated the empires of the Medes and Lydians: he replied to me, that he followed Lansberge, and that he would not insert my note in his book. If M. Mayer hath placed his eclipse in another year, in which there was no total one, I do not contest it; but he hath not proved that it is the eclipse in question, predicted by Thales, and which happened on the fourth year of the 48th Olympiad, the 170th from the foundation of Rome, according to Pliny, as I have shewn in a short memoir, sent to M. Freret, since my letter to M. de Vignoles. The year of this central and total eclipse, which occasioned the peace between Alyattes and Cyaxares, or his successor Astyages, regulates the chronology of that time and the chronology of sacred scripture, with regard to the irruption of Gog and Magog, or the Scythians, into Palestine.—See Ezek. xxxix. and Herodotus. The chronicle of Eusebius hath led our chronologers astray. Observe that father le Comte quits Petau, and places also this eclipse on the 28th of May, 585.

joined

joined to a profound knowledge of the learned languages, had made him remark a great number of faults in the different translations that have been made of the Bible. If he had translated it himself, he would have disincumbered our sacred books of a great many miracles, which have owed their existence, he said, to nothing but the love of the marvellous and to the ignorance of translators, who, without edifying plain people, disgust and offend the intelligent and well instructed. He possessed all the branches of polite literature *: he even made verses; but it must be confessed, that when he sat in judgment on any pieces of poetry, the man of taste was sometimes totally lost in the exact and critical grammarian.

" If his knowledge was great, his modesty was not less so. I will here only produce two striking instances on occasions where it is the most difficult to display it. As soon as the gentlemen of the academy of sciences had found a degree to the north of Paris of less extent than degrees to the south of the same city, M. Fontenelle concluded, that the earth was a spheroid, flattened towards the poles. M. Abauzit, on the contrary, maintained, that if the observation was certain, the earth must be a sphe-

* Voltaire knew our author in his old age, highly esteemed him, and sometimes consulted him.

roid lengthened towards the poles: this he proved by a very simple demonstration, which he had prefixed to his *Memoir on the Figure of the Earth*. This he sent in writing to his friends; and Fontenelle, some time after, altered his opinion. From that time Abauzit was afraid lest his memoir should be made public; he refused the loan of it to any one, and two years before he died he blotted out the first pages of it, in which he had demonstrated that Fontenelle was mistaken. In cursorily perusing the dissertation of M. Daniel Bernoulli on the flux and reflux of the sea, he read, that the height of the tides was inversely in proportion to the *density* of the fluid; that they would be, for example, fourteen times less high if the ocean was composed of mercury, without considering that the approaches of different bodies towards one and the same, are all equal in equal times, how different soever they may be in density. Those who know how flattering it is to discover an error in a work of a great man, will admire him who declined doing himself the honour of having discovered this.

As a member of the legislative body, he ever manifested great wisdom and great moderation: this last sometimes does not merit an eulogy: there are situations, in which the dangers of one's country change moderation into weakness, and ought to pluck it from our bosoms.

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In the troubles of 1734, by means of his connections, he held with those who wished a more aristocratical government than ours is; but his heart was with the people; he was still much more so in the last dissensions: he did not dissemble his sentiments; and as he blamed not every thing in the opposite party, he did not approve every thing in his own; both sought to give a sanction to their pretensions. Abauzit had no private interests to gratify, he thought of nothing but the good of his country. He foresaw at first, with sorrow, that these troubles would bring in a new mediation: he dreaded it; he found it humiliating for the magistrates, for the citizens, for the whole state. He had not the gratification to see peace resume her reign in his country, and it is perhaps in this alone that he was unhappy*.

I shall not describe that equanimity of soul which he always preserved, the charms of his conversation, his shyness as to every thing that would make him distinguished, that sweet and amiable disposition, which made him speak to the only domestic whom he kept, not in the

* He composed two dissertations on the ancient history of Geneva, which are in the fourth volume of Spon. He bequeathed to the library several MSS. relating to the history of this city, and drew up for M. Vernet a dissertation on the primitive times of the republic of Geneva.

strain of a good master, but in the style of a friend, his frugality, his simple and innocent manners, which imparted to his youth the maturity of advanced age, and to his age the vivacity of a young person. His portraiture will appear very imperfect to those who knew him, and it bears too little a resemblance to him for such a slight sketch to be useful to those who were strangers to him.

Nor will I here exhibit a list of his friends: the reader would find great names among them; but he was great enough himself not to stand in need of the consideration which they might give him. In writing the eulogy of these great men, it ought ever to be added: *He was the friend of the wise Abauzit.*

Here let us however except persons still less known by their birth and their dignities than by their virtues and their rare attainments; such is the duchess of Enville, a philosophic lady, in the bosom of greatness and splendor, who knows how to conduct life at a court, and merit the esteem of the wise and learned: the duke of Rochefoucault, in whom he saw displayed all the genius of the author of the *Maxims*; the earl of Stanhope, whose name at once recalls the idea of a scholar, of a philosopher, and of an excellent patriot. But if we owe

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homage

homage to virtue in an illustrious station, do we owe nothing to a citizen, who by virtue renders his obscure station respectable? I should blush to pass over in silence plain individuals, who merited the esteem and friendship of ABAUZIT, if I did not find myself under a necessity of shortening these memoirs, and if I did not think that the friends of a philosopher, who did not study to make himself known, cherish the same desire of stealing through this vain life unnoticed.

M. Rousseau has not written his panegyrick; he has held up to the world a true portrait of him in a note in his *New Heloise*. "Not that this philosophical age has not produced one true philosopher: I know one, I must confess, and but one: but the happiest circumstance is, that he resides in my native country: shall I venture publickly to name him, whose honour it is to have remained unknown? Yes, learned and modest ABAUZIT, let your sublime simplicity forgive my zeal, which, to say truth, hath not your name for your object. No, it is not you I would make known in an age unworthy to admire you: it is GENEVA I would honour, by making it known as the place of your residence; it is my fellow-citizens who are honoured by your presence. Happy the country, where the merit that conceals itself, is by so much the more esteemed: happy the people, among whom

whom presumptuous and forward youth is ashamed of its dogmatic insolence, and blushes at its vain knowledge before the learned ignorance of age. Venerable and virtuous old man, you have never been praised by babbling wits; no noisy academican has written your eulogium. Instead of depositing like them all their wisdom in books, you have displayed it in your life as an example to the country you have deigned to make the object of your esteem. You have lived like Socrates; but he died by the hands of his fellow-citizens, while you are cherished by yours*."

"You are acquainted with the motives of my adversaries †, said Rousseau in the last letter he wrote to him; here are mine: judge them,

* Nouvelle Heloise, tom. iii. p. 5. edit. Lausanne. English translation, vol. iii. p. 201, printed for Becket, 1769.

† M. Rousseau, who had just composed the articles on the Music of the Ancients in the Encyclopedia, and had visited for that purpose all the books in the French king's library, had a conversation on this subject with M. Abauzit. He found him so learned and well instructed on this topic, that he imagined this wise man had just been studying it. *It is ten years ago*, said M. Abauzit, *since I quitted this branch of science*. This learned man highly esteemed M. Rousseau, loved his writings, admired his genius, took the tenderest concern in his misfortunes. That part of his writings, which he appeared to have read the ofteneft was the Social Contract, on which he had written a great number of notes.

judge

judge me. They could punish me if I was culpable, but if CATO acquits me, they have oppressed me."

He died with the firmness and virtues of a wife and good philosopher on the 20th of March, 1767.

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REFLECTIONS ON IDOLATRY.

THE term idolatry, considered in its etymology, signifies the worship of idols.

An idol is a representation of an apprehended divinity, whether it resemble its original, as an image or statue, or whether there be no similitude between them, as the ox worshipped by the Egyptians in honour of Osiris, one of their first kings, whom they believed to be deified after his decease. An idol also is taken for the deity which it represents, or of which it is the symbol.

With regard to worship, the *external* must be distinguished from the *internal*.

The *external* consists in genuflection, invocation, burning incense, and in other similar rites, which, according to the circumstances of times and places, may be equivocal signs of adoration, but which ordinarily are restricted and deter-

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mined to the respective customs of different countries by a species of institution or convention.

Internal worship consisteth in reposing confidence in God, as in a being, from whom a dependent creature expects his happiness: and this act of the mind, which alone is capable of fixing the object of its worship, *formally* distinguishes what external actions might otherwise confound.

Consequently external acts, which are equivocal, and even subject to vary with the instability of custom, cannot constitute the essence of adoration, which, like every other duty, is immutable in its nature, and which angels as well as men equally render to the Deity.

When, therefore, we prostrate ourselves, or exhibit any other token of veneration, if the act terminate here, we only discharge a ceremony that is common to God and to an earthly prince. But if, during this prostration of the body, the mind exalts its views to the Creator, and places all its confidence in him, it is then only that real adoration is formed. On the contrary, if the mind happens to be mistaken in the object of its worship, and confides in a false God, adoration is converted into idolatry.

Hence it is, by a very natural figure, that covetousness in the scriptures, is styled idolatry: because the miser foundeth all his hopes in his gold, which he regards as the only depositary of his

his happiness, and *which*, to use an expression of PHILO, *he places in the most sequestered part of his house like an idol in its sanctuary.*

As the crime of *idolatry*, equally with the immutable duty of *genuine adoration*, is an act which the pure and abstracted mind may incur, hence we learn the true definition of both.

The character essential to *true adoration*, whether it be manifested by some exterior token, or exhibit itself in any mode whatever, is a lively perception of our entire dependence, by which we annihilate ourselves before the Creator; and at the same time an homage by which we ascribe to him, as the sole fountain of all good, not merely all the blessings which we possess, but all we expect from his inexhaustible bounty.

In like manner, the essence of that *idolatry*, which is independent of all circumstances that are external and liable to change, and which is compatible to an intelligent creature, at all times and in every place, consists also in the same disposition of mind, which has just been attributed to *genuine adoration*; with this difference only, that *genuine adoration* directs itself to a *true*, idolatry to a *false* object, apprehended however to be real. In effect it implies, that confidence is reposed in a being, of whose power we have no certain assurance. Thus idolatry, whether it be accompanied with any exterior act or not, necessarily supposes a

sincere intention on the part of the worshipper, and should it happen that a person is constrained to manifest some external veneration for an object, which in his mind he is fully persuaded to have no title to it, this would not constitute him an idolater, properly speaking, for this would be to betray his understanding and violate his conscience; a crime, which though different, is not less atrocious than idolatry.

This distinction might avail to diminish the number of idolaters in the world, but the number of *hypocrites* would be prodigiously enlarged. I sincerely wish these consequences may never take place. What I propose in this discourse, is to reduce idolatry to what it is formally and essentially in its nature, and to avoid all arbitrary definitions, which are liable to contest. The idea, which the generality affix to idolatry is so complex, and involved in so many adventitious circumstances, that one cannot unfold and exhibit it but by a kind of anatomical dissection. There may be inconvenience in confounding ideas at *first*, which one must be obliged perhaps to distinguish *afterwards*, and it is always of use to distinguish them in the beginning of a treatise, in order that in the sequel we may reunite them under such expressions as we are willing to employ.

But if I were ever such a friend to distinction, I own the common and trite distinction into civil worship and religious worship, is in my opinion
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by no means proper to characterize idolatry. For what reason should religious worship be distinguished from civil worship, or rather I should say, civil honour, for our language is a stranger to the phrase *civil worship* or civil adoration: is it by the *quality of the object* that is venerated, and by the external acts which are performed in honour of it? Is it by the *nature of the favours* which are implored, or by the circumstances of *time and place*. It will appear from the concise detail which I am going to exhibit, that tho' the distinction of civil honour and religious honour be ostensible, it does not however afford much precision or perspicuity.

1. Is it the *quality of the object* that is venerated, that constitutes the honour we pay *civil or religious*?—*civil* with regard to a prince or person of distinction; *religious* and legitimate, if it is paid only to God the Creator; religious and illegitimate, if it have for its object an angel or some holy person. What! would not an angel, an ambassador from God; tho' no *political* persons, or placed in any rank of civil distinction, be worthy of no honour? Were Balaam and Nebuchadnezzar guilty of idolatry; the one for prostrating himself before the angel who stood in his way, the other before Daniel who had just interpreted his dream? One may refuse, if one choose it, to follow the example of a false prophet and a pagan king, but one would not condemn the

angel and the holy prophet, who accept this honour, at least do not oppose it.

2. The *external acts* of the body, considered simply in themselves, and abstracted from the intention which directs them, cannot also serve as a sufficient characteristic, for the reason I have just alledged, that they are very often equivocal and subject to change, according to the different ideas which men affix to them. The Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages are destitute of expressions capable of defining with precision the act of adoration. The sacred writings have not consecrated a term to this usage, and when they speak of it, it is only historically and in reference to the custom of the oriental nations, whose modes were not received in other countries, for there never has been any thing fixed and permanent. Some worshipped in a standing posture, others prostrated themselves on the earth; sometimes with hands joined or crossed on their bosoms, sometimes applying one of them to their mouth*. Thus it is that the sacred writers do not regulate the posture of the body. As to honour, as well religious as civil, whether it be employed in worshipping God, or in testifying respect to some illustrious personage, every thing here is promiscuously mentioned without any marks of discrimination.

* This is the etymology of the Latin word *adorare*: says Pliny: *Adorare, manum ad os movere.*

Nebuchadnezzar the king, seized with devout admiration, prostrated himself before Daniel, and even commanded oblations and incense of the most grateful fragrance to be offered to him, for so the original literally signifies. Now if we strictly keep to the plain terms of the text, who would not understand it to assert a religious honour? But yet undoubtedly among the Chaldeans this was an honour merely *civil*, and if the prophet had deemed it *religious*, how could he have prevailed with himself to record to the world this circumstance, without disapproving in express terms an action so criminal, in whose guilt he would have been involved by publicly appearing to approve it! Thus it is, that external actions, of themselves, are so far from being a certain criterion by which to distinguish *religious* honour from civil, that on the contrary one cannot discern whether these acts belong to the one or the other, but by the internal adoration of which I have spoken, which always distinguishes by a formal act of the mind what the external act would appear to confound.

3. Perhaps one shall know by the *nature of the favours* which are expected from any object, or, if you please, by the manner in which the invocation is expressed or the wish which is conceived and uttered, whether the honour be civil or religious, and consequently lawful or culpable. In order to see whether this expedient be

always sure and infallible, let us take for example that devout wish which St. John places at the head of his epistle to the seven churches of Asia. *Grace and peace be unto you from Him who is, was, and is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness.* One cannot doubt but St. John in this passage understands the graces and favours which religion alone procures her votaries, nor believe that the honour, which he pays to these seven spirits in thus joining them, in this devout wish, with the one self-existent Being, is an honour merely civil: besides, to say, that here a single devout wish is only breathed, and no direct invocation made, would be to elude the difficulty by another distinction more subtle than solid. Let the invocation be direct or indirect, the Being whose succour is implored, is not less honoured: his power is equally acknowledged: and whoever would prefer this wish, *Grace and peace be unto you from Apollo*, would not be less idolatrous, than if he directly invoked this false God. But by the principle which I have already laid down, it will be easy for me in the sequel to justify this devout wish of the apostle.

4. Lastly, it may be alledged that we can with certainty know by the *circumstances of time and place*, whether the honour, which is paid, be *religious* and not *civil*; if, for instance, it is tendered in a temple, or even during divine service,

REFLECTIONS ON IDOLATRY.

service. And here in effect, the distinction, which I am examining, appears to have most weight. But in order to discover the weakness of this argument, one need only read what is recorded in the XXI. chapter of the First Book of Chronicles. King David, having convened the principal people among the Jews for the purpose of defraying the expences of a temple which they were going to erect instead of the tabernacle of the congregation, each person according to his abilities made an offering to Jehovah. Afterwards, when the service was concluded, all the assembly, says the sacred historian, *bowed down their heads and worshipped God and the king*: that is to say, turning themselves first towards the ark and afterwards towards the king. In judging only by external circumstances, had a Roman heathen been present, he would have believed that the Israelites paid their king some divine honour, such as they gave to their emperors: and to make use of another instance, substitute the Pope in the place of David, instantly the protestants would cry idolatry. Whence comes it then that the Israelites sinned not, and what is the general rule which ought to regulate the exceptions? This, in my opinion, can be no other than the principle of internal adoration, or still more generally, that intention of the mind which considers under one certain regard the object which it deems entitled to honour; and by this means we shall
answer

answer not only the questions which have just been proposed, but also every other that can be advanced upon the subject.

To begin with the last: If the Israelites, in the same external circumstances prostrated themselves before their God and before their king, they did not fail to distinguish internally what externally appeared to be confounded. By prostrating themselves *before Jehovah*, they acknowledged him for the king of kings, the sole absolute lord of the universe, and by prostrating themselves *before David*, they acknowledged him for that prince whom God himself had established over them.

If St. John prefers this remarkable desire, *Grace and peace be unto you from God, and from the seven spirits*, it is not that he acknowledges a supreme power in these seven spirits, that is to say, *those seven angels* who are afterwards mentioned, for by the circumstance of their being *before the throne* they manifest their dependence and the attention they pay to the orders of the Deity. But St. John wishes to the faithful grace and peace from the seven spirits, as they were to be the instruments and scourge with which God was going to punish the enemies of his church.

If Nebuchadnezzar, in prostrating himself before Daniel, who had interpreted his dream by divine inspiration, descended from that elevation which he held in society, to humble himself

self before his own slave; if he issued out orders that they should offer to him presents and rich perfumes, it was not that he lavished upon him all these honours with the same mind and with the very same intention with which he paid them at the shrine of his false divinities. Immediately after he manifests what his intention was, by the words which he addresses to Daniel: *Since thou hast discovered what was concealed, truly thy God is the God of Gods, the Lord of Lords, and the searcher of the most secret things.* Thus it was that this pagan king rendered glory to the true God: and, after having honoured his prophet, all these honours terminated on that great Being who inspired him.

If Balaam, after God had opened his eyes, prostrated himself before the angel, it was because he respected in him the minister of the divine vengeance. And when the angel said to him, *Thy way is perverse before me*, by this expression, which seems proper to the Deity, he does by no means affect a distinction to which he had no right, any more than when Balaam replies, *If it displease thee, I will get me back again.* He only considered this angel as a messenger who in proper terms signified to him the command of God; and the angel knew without doubt that Balaam himself made this distinction, otherwise he would have taken care of giving occasion to words which would have been very criminal in another sense.

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The apostles had also the same spirit of modesty, as appears from that declaration: *It pleased the holy spirit and us.* The christians, who received their decrees with the profoundest submission, manifested no inclinations to attribute to the apostles the same power and the same authority as to the Holy Spirit. But it *pleased the Holy Ghost*, because he was the sole arbiter, and it *pleased the apostles*, because they were in effect the organs and instruments of the Holy Spirit.

In like manner, when it is said of the Israelites, *That they believed in God and in Moses*, it is not that they reposed in Moses precisely the same* confidence as they ought to have done in God. But they *believed in God* as the only firm support of their confidence, and they *believed in Moses*, because he spoke to them from God.

In general, by forming a rule only from simple terms or external actions, every thing would be involved in confusion, and it would manifestly appear, that in order to determine properly the degree or nature of religious or civil honour, we must necessarily always consider the intention of the person who honours, and the different relations which he may have with the object honoured.

* This confidence in Moses was no usurpation of that confidence they owed to God, which suffered no diminution by it. These two affections are of a different species. The one is only relative to the other.

For example: if king Solomon prostrates himself before Bathsheba, as a son he honours his mother. If Nathan falls on his knees before David, as a subject he pays his duty to his sovereign. If the wise men throw themselves on the ground before Jesus Christ, in the character of new disciples, they render their homage to the Messiah. If Lot bows himself to the earth before the two angels, it was a civility which he thought it his duty immediately to express to common strangers; and had he known their characters, as he afterwards did, undoubtedly he would have paid them at least the same honour. Were they become unworthy of it by the character they supported? On the contrary, would not Lot have infinitely more respected in their persons the dignity of Jehovah's ambassadors, who had chosen them to be the executioners of his justice on the inhabitants of Sodom?

It is the will of God then that we honour his ambassadors in proportion to the character he impresses on them: but always with this reserve, that they are not worthy of honour, but only because he commissions them. In this respect*, the honour that is paid them and which terminates on God alone, cannot be that

* One must not consider this honour as if it were any invasion of that which is due to the supreme, which always continues inviolable and entire.

glory of which he appears so jealous, when he declares, *My glory I will not give to another*. But this glory, of which he is jealous, is that which is neither ascribed to him directly or indirectly, or when one places all one's confidence in another being, different from him, the supreme Creator; which properly constitutes the essence of idolatry.

Amongst the proofs which I have alledged of it, I have asserted that adoration is an immutable and necessary duty, with the obligations to which it is impossible that any creature, how exalted soever, can dispense: and that adoration, also, when it degenerates into idolatry, is a transgression of a law of nature which is anterior to every human or even divine institution. But the external rites, which are only accidental and of mere institution, are not prescribed or determined by any natural law, and consequently idolatry, or a religious confidence in a false object, may take place without these external acts, as well as that adoration which is paid to one sole true object. Thus idolatry might intermingle, and in effect is intermingled with a worship entirely spiritual, or such as would be paid by pure intelligences, which in order to be totally abstracted from matter, are not less obliged than other creatures to the indispensable duty of adoration.

Those christians, who acknowledged the two principles of the Manicheans, the one good, the other
other

other *bad*, were most certainly idolaters, tho' they rendered to the *bad* principle that spiritual worship which other christians paid to the good and the sole true principle. One cannot doubt that these Manicheans were guilty of idolatry, if we employ this term in the strictest acceptation, or, if you please, according to the proper definition of the sacred scripture. For the principal and natural effect which it attributes to idolatry is exciting the *jealousy* of the one true God, or at least to speak philosophically, something *analogous* to what we feel when we are bereaved in whole or in part of a right that appertains to us. Now who can doubt that the good principle and the only true God is jealous of the honour that is paid to the bad principle? On the contrary, the more this worship was spiritual and reasonable in its way, the more must it kindle the jealousy of the Creator.

The ancient Persians, according to indubitable monuments, had neither statues or images, nor even temples and altars*: and the reason they alledged for it would not have dishonoured the purest ages of christianity. They accused, says *Herodotus*, other nations of folly, who attributed to their divinities the same form and the same original as mankind, and who built them temples, as if the divinity could be circumscribed in them, which, said they, hath no

* Herodotus, lib. i.

other temple but the universe. If from a principle of gratitude or in order to placate the deity they offered victims to him, they did not reserve any portion of them for him, it being absurd to suppose him capable of regaling on them. His gratification arose from the *homage* of the sacrifice.

Thus far, the religion of these plain heathens is very rational, and perhaps even more spiritual than the worship of an infinite number of people who would regard that man as highly impious who did not class these ancient Persians in the rank of idolaters. In effect they were such, and it would be difficult to write their apology; so beautiful an exterior only covered the most subtle poison of paganism, since all this worship terminated on fire, which the philosophy of the Magians supposed to be diffused throughout the whole universe, of which it was the soul, the principle, and the support. A worship, consequently, which without being criminal as to its form, was with regard to its object unjust and idolatrous.

It is then in this properly that the idolatry of the pagans consisteth, were there nothing else to censure in the exterior of their worship.

After taking a short review of the Greeks and Romans, nations too considerable to be omitted, I will pass to those countries that were in the neighbourhood of Palestine, which the sacred history almost always represents as the originals

originals of that portrait of idolatry which it holds up to us. We shall see that this description exactly corresponds to the idea which in this discourse I intended to convey.

Jupiter was the great god of the Greeks and Romans. They conceived of nothing superior to him. Though they might have seen the contrary, if indeed superstition were capable of reasoning. Jupiter was but an old king of Crete, who, according to the general opinion, had become a God—how this happened, was a question they never thought of canvassing. Even after philosophy had spread its triumphs, the infatuation of people could believe every thing, and assert every thing, and not bear, at least in public, opposition to their supreme being. It is sufficient for my argument that these sentiments were entertained of Jupiter* as they were of a number of others. His *father* Saturn, his *wife* Juno, his legitimate and illegitimate *children*, the *cave* where he had been educated, and his *tomb*, which they shewed even in Cicero's time, are not so much the monuments of what he had in reality once been, as of what he was according to the creed of these same people, who however knew no deity superior to him.

* The same was the creed of the Siamese concerning their great and only God Somonschodon. According to them he formerly had been an holy man, but after his death was become the great God, they did not know how.

Such an extravagance at first astonishes us. The more one is enlightened, the more difficulty one hath to comprehend it. One would willingly treat such a system as a fable, and a calumny invented against mankind. In examining it coolly, however, one is at least habituated to it, and this must ensue, for the *fact* cannot be disputed. It is even the most certain and most universal origin of idolatry* in the judgment both of those ancients and moderns who have made the deepest researches into this subject: and as it is the principal point of view from which I shall always consider it, I hope it will not be deemed improper if I detain the reader a little on this topic.

Man is naturally surrounded with wants, and a sense of his own weakness obliges him to seek some *external* support. If through misfortune he is not elevated to the supreme cause, he fixes on some particular being in the universe who has the reputation of beneficent. What then ensues?—The gratitude of nations for the benefits of some great prince is converted into adoration; and this exalted idea which they had formed of him becomes more and more exaggerated from his final departure from

* Hic est vetustissimus referendi gratiam bene merentibus mos, ut numinibus adscribantur. Plin. lib. ii. cap. 7. See also Cicero de Natura Deorum, lib. ii. Chrysostom in 2 Cor. xii. Herod. lib. i.

them. They erect statues to him: they celebrate his memory by certain solemnities. Instantly the mausoleum becomes a temple, and the tomb an altar. Antiquity, which consecrates every thing, and which by means of sequestering the object renders it more venerable, forms at last the title of divinity when it knows of no superior character. This of necessity happens.

What I have here advanced is almost an exact translation of St. Cyprian*, who afterwards confirms by examples, especially by that of Jupiter, a circumstance which was very natural to the genius of these people: it shews that these nations, though ridiculed at present for their worship, might easily have recovered themselves from their error.

Euhemerus, who flourished 300 years before Christ, after accurate researches, found out, that the gods of paganism had formerly been men. As his work is lost, this is what some of the ancients say of it: Euhemerus, says St. Augustin†, hath advanced, not like a narrator

* Deos non esse quos colit vulgus, hic notum est: reges olim fuerunt, qui ob regalem memoriam coli apud suos postmodum etiam in morte cœperunt. Inde illis instituta templa: inde ad depinctorum vultus per imaginem detinendos expressa simulachra; quibus et immolabant hostias et dies festos dando honores celebrabant. Cyprianus de Idolorum vanitate.

† De Civitate Dei, lib. vi. cap. 7.

of fables, but like a diligent historian, that all these heathen divinities had only been mortals, subject to death. He had collected, says Lactantius*, the lives of Jupiter and of others whom they regard as gods; and he composed their history from sacred monuments which were preserved in the ancient temples. For this purpose, adds Eusebius†, he had undertaken very long journeys, and visited the coasts and the isles of the south sea, at the request of Cassander king of Macedonia. He was the LAUNOY of those times, with this difference, that the doctor of the Sorbonne struck out those saints of whom he knew nothing, while the other deposed the gods, because he knew them but too well. His history was translated by Ennius, as Cicero informs us. A proof, that this Eucheimerus had discovered from very good monuments the ancient humanity of the gods, was that he became a convert to atheism, as Sextus Empyricus tells us. A very rational system of atheism with regard to these gods, whom he knew very well had once been men.

I have also alledged the authority of Cicero‡, who in the second and third books Of the *Nature of the Gods*, speaks of the apotheosis of founders,

* Lib. i. cap. 2.

† Preparatio Evang. lib. ii. cap. 2. extracted from Diodorus Siculus.

‡ De Natura Deorum, lib. i.

conquerors, and of other illustrious persons, whose memories were held in veneration either for their great services or their exalted characters. Without rudely attacking superstition, in the softest language he insinuates that the gods of this species were framed by the gratitude of nations; and one plainly sees that here this great man speaks the real sentiments of his breast. But when he says, that Juno, Neptune, Apollo, and all that troop divine, were only *allegorical* existences, to give an air of personage to stars and to elements, one here perceives that he speaks with studied management, in order to secure a shelter in case of any accident, and in the main wipes away all these divinities from the system of the people, stripping them of every attribute but their names.

This manner of becoming deified with time is not by far so strange as the sudden apotheosis of the Roman emperors. An eagle flew from the pile, and served as a vehicle to the soul of the deceased, who winged his flight to take his seat among the immortal powers. He, who had just given public proofs of his humanity!

The Moors, as St. Cyprian* their neighbour tells us, were not at the trouble of this ceremonious parade. They roundly treated their kings as gods, without colouring their worship with the least specious pretext.

* Cyprianus, ubi supra.

It is well known that after the death of He-
phestion, Alexander would make him a god.
Instantly behold temples arise in several regions ;
feasts, sacrifices were instituted ; and even mi-
racles vended with so much confidence, that
Alexander, astonished with the success of this
new divinity, himself at last seriously believed
his friend was a god. He was extremely
pleased with the thought, says Lucian pleasantly,
not only of being a god himself, but with the
power he had of making gods of his friends.

This Macedonian prince was undoubtedly a
little absurd. But what shall we say of Adrian,
the emperor and philosopher, who repeated the
same follies for Antinous his favourite ! Perhaps
his character of philosopher will render him sus-
pected. But the question we are agitating here
regards the people, who went to these devotions
with great seriousness and sincerity !

If these gods of recent date were but of short
duration, it was owing to the sinister circum-
stance of their formation, and to their igno-
rance in fabricating them properly. Such a
person was declared a god by an edict of the
prince, or of the senate. They assembled to de-
liberate on the subject ; they debated ; they
spoke of this new deity who had lately been a
mortal. This was what spoiled all. When
they had the best intentions in the world for
him, the means they employed in creating him
a god defeated themselves. A god was ordered

to be made, but it was an unfortunate circumstance for him that they were to be his creators. The work transcended a power that was in the best credit. The multitude are not always to be duped in these great regards. They have inclination enough to criticize every thing that comes from a court. They credit much better a monster that breeds of itself in their own imagination. It is a field that produces nothing of what is sown there; it produces frequently a crop of weeds that was least of all expected.

The case was totally different with those apotheoses which were the work of time. His humanity by little and little disappeared. In proportion as they lost the sight of the man, they advanced the formation of the god. His interests went on better, as nobody appeared to intermeddle in them. Thus we seldom see that the *new* saints of the calendar, or those whom the court of Rome abruptly places there by the sole sanction of its own authority, have that popular reputation which the old saints maintain, who owe their canonization to the silent consent and tacit approbation of the people.

One ought not then to be astonished that these recent divinities had not the credit of others, who from time immemorial found themselves in possession of the first rank, and who only attracted a superior degree of veneration and religious confidence, because the title of their creation was lost in obscurity; a title which

was of no other service to these novel divinities but refreshing the memories of the people with an idea of their once sordid condition, the remembrance of which time alone could efface. But this is no objection to their all having once had the same original, nor against our judging concerning those whom we do not know so well, from those we know much better.

Now I ask, could the Creator, for that is the proper character of the *true God*, accept to himself those honours which they rendered to Jupiter, to that Jupiter of old the king of Crete, but now a god? They might, if they pleased, style him the *best and greatest*. He was always the son of Saturn in the idea of those very people who conceived of nothing superior to him. Consequently the worship which they addressed to him was idolatrous, even though this worship in other respects had been exempt from polytheism and the grossness of paganism.

It is true that since the introduction of the christian religion, whose professors zealously attacked the pagan system on this head, some philosophers, in order to defend it, thought it best, as the last resource, to allegorize Jupiter, to strip him of all the remains of humanity which still survived in the mind of the multitude; in a word, to make of him a necessary and all-perfect being. But from that moment this was no longer the Jupiter of paganism. This was in reality the Jehovah of the Jews and Christians,

Christians : all the difference was solely in the name.

Even before the christian religion appeared, they had from time to time a glimpse of some faint rays of this truth, which however did not reach the multitude. The inhabitants of Crete publicly gave out, and they had strongly possessed their neighbours with this imagination, that the greatest part of the gods were born in their island, and that on account of their benefits they had merited divine honours, which from them had extended into other countries*.

We have an hymn of Callimachus in honour of Jupiter, in which this wise poet says : The Cretans are always liars : they have, divine sovereign, built a sepulchre for you ; for you, who never died, and who existest eternally†.

But once more ; we are concerned with the populace, not with the philosophers, who were not idolaters, at least in this sense. The great fault which they incurred was, that their practice did not correspond to their sentiments, and that instead of combating error, they held the

* Diod. Siculus, lib. v. p. 230, 237.

† Yet he falls into the popular idea : for in the verse immediately following this, he says, *Rhea brought you forth among the Parrhasians*. The cradle of Jove answers our purpose as well as his tomb : so true is it that the sages of those times were but very little above the populace.

truth in unrighteousness; a reproach with which the apostle justly upbraids them.

It is not less easy to apply in particular to the other divinities of the pagans the general reflections which I have just made on the system of idolatry. Isis and Osiris were the great deities of Egypt, where one saw nothing but temples and statues dedicated to their honour. This their worship, especially of Isis, circulated through all the west. Isis had been queen of the Egyptians. She had governed them with great wisdom. In grateful acknowledgment they placed her in heaven as their great divinity, whilst the figure of her statues, and her name which denoted her sex, were still speaking proofs of her former humanity.

As for Osiris, who died by a melancholy accident, he was indebted to his wife Isis for the first divine honours which were paid to him. She commanded that every year they should deplore him as lost, and should afterwards rejoice at having found him. These are the women, who in the vision which Ezekiel had, sat weeping for Tammuz: for here he is describing the idolatry of the Israelites, who had suffered themselves to be corrupted by king Jeroboam, the ancient guest of the Egyptians, and afterwards the imitator of their worship.

In effect, as Plato says in his *Phædrus*, *Tammuz*, an ancient king of Egypt was called by the Greeks *Ammon*. Others, according to
Diodo-

Diodorus*, named him Osiris. Egypt is called in scripture the *country of Ham*, who first inhabited it. Now Thamus, Chamus, or Hamus, which others pronounced Hammon, was but one and the same name, varying according to different dialects or the diversity of aspiration†.

As these remarks throw a good deal of light on the vision of Ezekiel, I will further illustrate it in a few words. The scene is laid in the temple, in order to represent in a stronger light the enormity of the Israelites, who had abandoned the *true God*, the *God* of their fathers, to embrace the worship and the false gods of strangers.

The prophet saw at first, towards the north side, the *idol of jealousy*; and then towards the opposite side, behold every form of creeping things and other abominable beasts, portrayed upon the wall. The Egyptians were the first‡ who introduced the use of statues and images in religion. But what was peculiar to them, and in spite of the high esteem which they held in the world, render them the subjects of ridicule to other nations, was the worship they paid to the vilest animals, and even the images which

* Diodor. Sic. lib. i. p. 15.

† Herodotus, lib. ii. cap. 2. Plutarch, De Iside et Osiride p. 354.

‡ Herodotus, lib. ii. cap. 2.

they made of them. This worship, ridiculous as it was, did not fail to infect the ten tribes, and even the other two tribes, by means of the too strict connection which some kings of Judah formed with the Egyptians.

Ezekiel afterwards beheld *what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery*. This was what is called the *mysteries of Isis*, of which only the initiated partook, and which they carefully concealed from the vulgar: mysteries, which the prophet treats here as an abomination, and which the Romans themselves, in the height of their idolatry, prohibited by public decrees.

Then he saw the woman who *wept for Thamus*, that is, as I have shewn, for Osiris the husband of Isis, and whom, by a little change, Herodotus and Plutarch call Ammus.

At last he prepares us for the sight of an abomination more enormous than all these. This was men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, namely the sanctuary, which was in the western part of the temple, who prostrated themselves towards the east before the sun. By thus turning their backs to the sanctuary, they testified that their homage was not paid to the true God either directly or indirectly. But when they turned towards the east in order to prostrate themselves before the sun, they clearly manifest that all this worship terminated in
Osi-

ris* alone, whose soul was placed in the sun according to the opinion of the Egyptians. In this manner the anniversary solemnity, which I have mentioned, and which commenced with deploring the loss of Osiris, concluded with rejoicings on having happily found him again*.

The better to comprehend the reason of this last superstition, it is to be remembered that the people in deifying their departed heroes, did not fail to place their souls in heaven; and as they thought it proper that the imagination should fix on some particular part, they placed the soul

* Interpreters of scripture do not seem to have rightly understood the sense of the whole vision of Ezekiel, who represents the idolatry of the Israelites to be *borrowed from the Egyptians*, as he frequently declares. I will add here the explication of a circumstance rather singular, which is recorded in the 17th verse, which our version has badly rendered, *So they put the branch to their nose*, instead of, *behold them, they carry before them the Zimora!* The Hebrew word *zimora* signifies a *part cut off*: Every one knows the accident which happened to Osiris, who was slain, and cut in pieces by Typhon, according to some, and by a crocodile according to others. Isis re-assembled the severed limbs of her husband except that which she found it impossible to recover; notwithstanding delicacy, she caused the figure of it to be worshipped. This is the *zimora* of which the prophet here speaks, and which he expresses more clearly chap. xvii. 17. The priests, as we learn from Apuleius, who was an eye witness, and was initiated in the mysteries of Isis, *carried this nameless part before them*. These are his words. Hence the name of *Phallophoria* which this festival had. They placed these *pballi*, which were of gold, in the temples.

† These two parts of the festival were called *αφανισμος* and *εμπνοη*.

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in some certain star, from whence they believed it governed the universe.

This manifestly appears from various monuments of antiquity, whose visible traces still remained in the apotheosis of the Roman emperors: for new follies are the best proofs that their have been old ones; and nothing so perfectly resembles one century as the subsequent. The worship of the stars introduced itself much later. It owes its origin to the worship of deceased heroes, whose souls winged their flight to occupy some star after their release from the the body, as the Romans honestly believed the soul of Julius Cæsar did.

The Egyptians then figured to themselves the soul of Osiris in the sun, as they imagined the soul of Isis to be in the moon. But in order to enjoy their divinities still nearer, by a mode extremely particular, they consecrated to them two living oxen, which they adored as they true symbols of their presence*. The one, which they called Mnevis, was consecrated in a city of Heliopolis to the sun, or, to Osiris; the other, which they called Apis, was consecrated in Memphis to the moon, whose crescent, in the shape of horns, is ordinarily seen in the images of the goddess Isis.

* Plutarch & Osiride, de Iside, p. 364. Ælian de Animal, lib. ii. cap. 2. Porphyrius apud Euseb. Præp. Evang. lib. iii. cap. 13. Ammian. lib. xxii.

These two *oxen*, which Herodotus calls *calves**, were undoubtedly the model of those *two calves* which Jeroboam set up, the one at Bethel, the other at Dan. This prince had lived a long time among the Egyptians, whose protection was necessary to him in order to maintain himself upon the throne of Israel; and he totally changed the religion of his fathers, not only the better to gain the good-will of his allies, but also, as the scripture assures us, to alienate entirely his new subjects from the king of Judah their lawful sovereign.

Thus the prophet Ezekiel often calls the worship of the Israelites *an abomination*, which had been introduced among them from Egypt. He says that the idolatry of their ancestors, both in Egypt and at their departure from it, was derived from the same source. Joshua, before he died, said to them, *Take away the gods from among you which your fathers worshipped on the other side of the river, and in Egypt.*

-St. Stephen also expressly assures us, that in the desert they rejected God, and turned their hearts towards Egypt; when they said to Aaron, *Make us gods that may go before us.* In reality the golden calf which they made in the wilderness was only in imitation of the Egyptians. They forgot, says Philo of Alexandria, what they owed to the self-existent Be-

* Herodotus, lib. iii. cap. 28.

ing; and in making a golden calf, they mimicked the fictions of the Egyptians, who worshipped that animal*. Lactantius, St. Jerom, and almost all the ancients have made the same observation. I shall not dwell so long on the the gods of the other nations, which were in the neighbourhood of the Jews. *Bel*, stiled by the Greeks Jupiter the Assyrian, who was the great divinity of the Babylonians, and whom Nebuchadnezzar calls *his god* by way of eminence, was originally, as the ablest writers all agree, only an ancient king of Babylon, but to whom his subjects began to pay divine honours as soon as the knowledge of the Creator came to be extinct among them.

Nebo, *Merodac*, and other gods of the Chaldeans, according to scripture, are names, also, which occur in the catalogue of their ancient kings, and prove to us at this day, the same thing which one day the *Louises*, who have appeared in the world since the *Saint* of that name, would prove to posterity, if ever they should become gods in the opinion of mankind.

Moloc, the great god of the Ammonites, who sacrificed to him the noblest of victims, even man, was no other than an ancient king of the country, as his proper name denotes; for *Moloc*, or *Melec*, according to different dialects

* Philo, Vita Mosis, lib. iii.

in which the vowels commonly vary, signifies *king*.

In like manner, *Adra-melec*, or *Ana-melek*, gods of the Sepharvaim or Sippwarenians, a people of Mesopotamia, were once princes of that country, their names signifying *king of Adra*, *king of Ana*, which were towns in the neighbourhood of Sipphara. They became the peculiar and titular gods of these people, who were transplanted to Samaria by the king of Assyria, and who afterwards joined to their old gods the Jehovah of the Jews; without considering him, however, under the idea of creator, but merely as the particular god of their new country.

*Succoth-benoth**; another divinity of these colonies, which came from Babylon, and which signifies *the tents of the daughters*, has so much affinity with the *Mylitta* of the Babylonians, and with their festivals, which Herodotus† describes, that one cannot doubt of the sex of this pretended and impure divinity, nor consequently of what she formerly had been. It is the same as Astaroth, or Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians, to whom Solomon also built temples, and whom Cicero‡ calls the *Venus* of the Syrians;

* 2 Kings chap. xvii. 29.

† Herodotus, lib. i. cap. 101. See also Baruch, chap. vi. 42 though he names not this divinity.

‡ Lib. iii. De Natura Deorum.

as Herodotus calls Mylitta or Succoth-benoth the *Venus of Assyria*,

I have nothing to offer concerning *Chemosh* of the Moabites, nor concerning *Dagon* of the Philistines, any more than concerning *Baal*, *Rimmon*, *Chim*, and other gods of the Syrians or Phoenicians, except that it is impossible to prove that they were not the ancient kings of those respective countries.

But in order to supply the defect of literary monuments which here fail us, it is sufficient to read *Eusebius's Preparatio Evangelica*, who hath made the deepest researches into this subject, and supported his arguments on the authority of Philo Byblius, an heathen author, extremely well versed in the antiquities of the Phoenicians. The most ancient nations among the *Barbarians*, says he, for thus they denominated all who were not Greeks, adopted for the supreme objects of their worship persons who were illustrious either by useful discoveries or by other benefits which they had conferred on the human race, and they rendered divine honours to them, as to those whom they believed to be the sources of those blessings which they enjoyed*. At last Eusebius thus concludes: The truth speaks of itself, and cries to us with a loud voice, that these gods of whom we are speaking were once mortal men†.

* Θεους νομισαὶ ΜΕΤΙΣΤΟΤΕ τοὺς τὸ πρὸς τῇ βίᾳ τῆς χρείας
εὐποροῦσιν. α. λ. Euseb. Prep. Evan. lib. i. cap. 9.

† Ibid. lib. iii. cap. 3.

One sees by this detail that the idolatry of the Pagans, for the most part at least, was fundamentally real atheism. I understand by atheism, ignorance of the *first cause*. St. Paul had too much reason to say of them, *that they were without God, and without hope*. They were without God, because they knew not the Creator, the only *true God*; and their hope was without foundation, because they confided in chimeras, which could be of no avail to them.

It is then manifest that the Creator could not take to himself honours which they addressed to these pretended gods, who even still preserved in the mind of their worshippers so many vestiges of weakness and humanity. When I say that the Creator could not *take to himself* these honours, I do not understand this expression in a more figurative sense, as if God had only rejected a worship, which was indeed addressed to him, but was displeasing to him: I take it in its proper and natural acceptance; in the same manner as the *good* and the sole *true* Principle could not attribute to itself the homage that was paid to the *bad* principle, which the Manicheans personally distinguished from the *good*.

Sacred scripture, especially the Old Testament, from one end to the other, confirms the sense which I here adopt. But to express this more succinctly, every thing which it says concerning idolatry may be reduced to two heads,

the one, matter of *right*; the other, matter of *fact*.

The first is, that God, by his nature, as an intelligent being, interests himself in the honour which is due to him; and that he cannot cede his own proper glory to another: that this homage, which he requires, does not consist in the gestures of the body, but in the humiliation and devotedness of the soul; for the true worshippers, whom God requires, are those who worship him in spirit and in truth. This is the definition of Jesus Christ; and the reason is evident; it is because this adoration of the mind, this perfect confidence, this total devotedness, presupposes in its object an infinite power, an infinite goodness, an infinite wisdom, which are the principal character, and, if I may so express it, the whole glory of God. Now idolatry, according to the definition which I have given of it, transfers these perfections and this glory to a false object. It openly attacks the majesty of the Creator, and wounds his just rights in the most essential place.

The other truth, which regards matter of *fact*, is that the Creator always personally distinguishes himself from Moloch, from Baal, and from all the other gods of paganism. For what means that command, *You shall have no other God besides me*? Doth it not suppose that mankind might be blinded to that degree as to lose all knowledge of the Creator, and ransack
nature

nature for an object in which to repose their confidence? What does that passage signify, *You have carried the tabernacle of your god Moloch, the image of Chiun, and the star of your gods*, if not that these gods were persons distinct from Jehovah, apprehended at least as such in the mind of idolaters? What does that declaration mean, *I will not give my glory to another*, if it doth not denote a false external worship which they addressed to the *true God*? What can that jealousy signify which he avows against false gods, that continual comparison of idolatry to a woman who abandons her husband to prostitute herself to *another*, if this *other*, in reality, is only God himself, though served with a false worship? To be jealous of one's self, is not this absurd? This is a figure, it is true, employed by the prophets, whose style is very elevated; but a figure also which must convey some meaning, like that expression, for example, *Thou shalt call me no more Baal, but thou shalt call me thy husband*; and an infinite number of passages of this kind, not only in the prophets, but also in the sacred historians, whose style is very simple, and which suppose that all who are idolaters have lost the knowledge of the true God.

In effect St. Paul tells us, *That the world through wisdom knew not God*, whose perfections were so visible in the works of creation. He tells us, *The pagans were without God*; that is, they knew not the true God. He says indeed,

in another place, *That they had known God*; but either this is to be understood of the philosophers, or one must distinguish the time. Formerly mankind knew their Creator, but this knowledge was afterwards lost. St. Paul also adds, *They did not glorify him as God*; that is, under the idea of Creator, and in the proper person of the universal Parent, *Neither were thankful*; because, in effect, these thanksgivings were addressed to false gods, personally distinguished from the Creator: for otherwise the not rendering acknowledgments to what they apprehended to be God, was not by any means their crime. Their long prayers, full of eternal repetitions, would have been irksome to him, if he had been capable of hearing them. Finally, the apostle says, *They changed the truth of God into a lie*; that is, for the one true God they substituted false imaginary deities; and, lost to all rational discernment, worshipped the creature, abandoning the Creator.

One may, therefore conclude, from all that I have advanced on this subject, that idolatry, such as I at first defined it, violates the divine law, both natural and positive. This it is which distinguishes *idolatry* and *superstition*, which properly violates only positive law, unless by accident it happen to strike at one of the great laws of nature, as for instance, by immolating human victims.

Idolatry

Idolatry violates the law of nature, in that it changes the object of worship; an object, which one may easily discover by the unassisted light of reason. Superstition changes the true *mode* of worship, which cannot perfectly be known but by the aid of revelation.

Idolatry, which violates the law of nature, can never receive sacredness by a positive law; though what had appeared superstitious to simple uninstructed reason, may become lawful by a positive prescription.

To honour the Deity by animal sacrifices, to worship him in the presence of an ark, as the Jews did, would have been deemed superstition in the judgment of plain reason, but which became lawful under the Mosaic constitution. Now that this mode of worship is abrogated by the gospel, it would be superstition, that is, a false addition to that worship, which God at present requires.

But to adore a false god, like Osiris, in the presence of an ox, was *idolatry* and *superstition* at the same time: idolatry, with regard to the *object* adored; and superstition, with regard to the *manner* of adoring.

To believe that we can appease the true God by human sacrifices, is the most atrocious of all superstitions. To adore the true God under the presence of some sensible object, which is not apprehended to resemble him, is the most excusable of all superstitions, before God have per-

mitted or forbidden it: if it is true that he weighs actions in the balance of equity, and not according as it pleases man to class them under such and such a predicament. But to sacrifice human victims to a false god, as the Egyptians* did in honour of Osiris, upon his own tomb, is the most flagitious idolatry, and at the same time the most enormous superstition that ever was practised.

* Diod. Sicul. lib. i. p. 56.

OF

OF
M Y S T E R I E S
IN
R E L I G I O N.

MYSTERIES are a source of disputation and of division among christians. Some would totally banish them from religion; others, not content with those which it may admit, create themselves a pleasure in augmenting the number of them, and multiply them to infinity. What side ought one to take in this dispute? Is there no middle path to pursue, between these two opposite extremes? This is what I design to canvass in the ensuing discourse. To this purpose we will first observe the different senses which this word *mystery* may admit: secondly, we will examine in what sense we may say that there are mysteries in religion; and in what manner one is obliged to submit to those

those which it contains : in the last place, we will deduce from the principles laid down, some general reflections on the conduct which christians ought to observe with regard to mysteries.

The word *mystery* in general signifies a *thing concealed* ; but as a thing may be concealed from us different ways, this name is attributed to various things which are not equally concealed from us, and which have not, with regard to us, the same degree of obscurity.

I. The sacred penmen gave the name of *mystery* to those truths which revelation discovers to us, and which would have been unknown to men had they enjoyed only the guidance of reason. Thus the doctrine of the vocation of the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel is called a mystery ; because that before Jesus Christ had commanded his apostles to preach the gospel through the whole world, this design, which God had formed, of manifesting himself to all men, was a thing unknown, a thing concealed. In this sense it is that St. Paul, informing the Christians that all mankind shall not be dead when Jesus Christ shall descend to judge the world, calls this doctrine a *mystery*, because that was a particular circumstance, with regard to the last judgment, which mankind had been ignorant of till that time : it had been a thing concealed from them till the time that St. Paul informed them of it. It is in this sense that the

the word *mystery* is most frequently employed in the books of the New Testament.

2. The name of *mystery* is also given to those doctrines of religion which acquaint us but imperfectly with those subjects which they present to our minds, which only communicate to us insufficient ideas. It is in this sense that one may say, that the conduct of Providence is a *mystery*; because, though we know various things concerning the manner in which Providence governs this universe, we are very far from knowing all the rules which it observes in this great regard.

3. One gives the name of *mystery* to what is obscure and unknown to us in the things that relate to religion. We do not know, for example, in what time God will make his gospel known to those nations, which hitherto have been plunged in the darkness of paganism: this to us, we say, is a *mystery*. We are ignorant also, for instance, in what manner God will judge those who shall have fallen into this or that error, which appears dangerous to us: in this we acknowledge a *mystery*. We are ignorant what motive influenced the Deity to communicate his gospel to one nation rather than to another at a certain time: on this subject we say, with St. Paul, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

4. *Divines* give the name of *mystery* to certain doctrines, which are, say they, above reason, and which reason cannot comprehend. In this sense they style the doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation a *mystery*.

5. There are *divines* who make use of this word to denote doctrines, which are not only incomprehensible but even contradictory. It is in this sense that the Roman Catholics call their transubstantiation a *mystery*.

In fine, the word *mystery* is sometimes employed to denote in general the truths of religion. It seems even that the scripture sometimes makes use of it in this sense. Thus Christ said to his disciples: *To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, that is, to know the truths of my gospel, which remain concealed from the rest of mankind. *Let every one regard us*, says St. Paul, *as stewards of the mysteries of Christ*, meaning of those truths which Jesus Christ came to teach men, and of which the greatest part of men are ignorant. *We speak to you the wisdom of God in a mystery*; that is, we publish an excellent institution which God has revealed to us, and the greatest part of whose truths was before unknown to the world. These are things which eye hath not seen, as he afterwards adds, nor ear heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

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The Jews and Pagans were fallen into such dreadful darkness of ignorance and error, that the greatest part of the truths, even the most plain and obvious which the apostles preached to them, were mysteries to them; truths which they had been ignorant of till that time, and for the knowledge of which they were indebted to the apostles. For which reason it is, that these last sometimes give the name of *mystery* to the truths which they deliver, whatever may be their nature; because being unknown, they were *mysteries* to the people to whom they were communicated. To take the word *mystery* in this general sense, all religion will be full of *mysteries*, since in this sense they give the name of *mystery* to all the truths which it contains, even to the plainest, and to those which are the most level to our capacity. But this is not the business in hand. The question is to know, if by taking this word in the other senses which we have indicated, we can aver that there are mysteries in religion. This is what we shall immediately examine.

First then, if by *mysteries* are understood truths which revelation discovers, and which were unknown to us by reason, it is certain that there are various mysteries of this kind in the Christian religion. Those truths, for example, that Jesus Christ is the saviour of men; that he passed his life in an abject condition; that he died upon a cross; that he is risen again; that he ascended into heaven; that he shed from thence
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the effusions of the spirit upon the apostles; that he will come one day to judge the whole world; that all the dead shall rise to make their appearance together at his tribunal; and several other truths of this nature, are things of which our reason could not inform us, and which we have learned solely from Christianity. They are therefore all of them so many *mysteries*, which the gospel hath revealed to us. But it ought to be remarked, that *after* this revelation these *mysteries* cease to be mysteries; they are no longer things concealed; they are things which we know as accurately as those truths which are best known to us by reason; they are secrets which cease to be secrets to us, from the moment that God has been pleased to impart them to us. One ought not to make any difficulty in receiving mysteries of this kind, which one may find in the books of the New Testament. The divinity of these books once proved, we ought to receive all the truths in which they instruct us in a clear and accurate manner, though reason of itself would not conduct us to those truths.

2. If by *mystery* we understand doctrines which only give us inadequate ideas of the subjects which they present to our minds, it is certain that there are diverse *mysteries* of this nature in religion. All the perfections of God, all his works, our own nature, are in this respect *mysteries*. We have only very imperfect ideas of

all these things. What the scripture delivers to us on these topics, is not sufficient to give us a perfect knowledge of these great objects. At present, says St. Paul, we see but in part, we see through a glass darkly. There is in almost all things which are the objects of religion, a bright and dark side. In this respect then, there are almost every where *mysteries*. But what ought to be remarked is, that we are obliged to receive of these mysterious doctrines only what is clear in them, and what is level to our capacities. We are not obliged to view them but only on the luminous side which they exhibit to us. We ought not, neither can we contemplate them on the dark, by which they are inaccessible to us. I will render this reflection perceptible by an instance. One may regard eternity as a *mystery*. In eternity there are circumstances we cannot comprehend. How is it possible, for example, to add always to a duration which is already infinite. If a being hath existed from all eternity, it seems that he must have existed an infinite number of years, an infinite number of days. Are there then as many years as days in the immense extent of his duration! These are difficulties which extremely embarrass us on this subject. This is the dark side of this doctrine, on which we are not obliged to pronounce. But there is in the eternity of God something clear, and of which we easily form an idea; that is, that God hath always existed,

isted, and that he will always exist; that he hath had no beginning, and will never have an end; and this is all we are obliged to believe on this subject. With regard to *mysteries* of this nature, therefore, we ought to receive what they exhibit to us clearly, and to suspend our judgment in acknowledging our ignorance in regard to what is obscure in them.

3. If by *mystery* is understood what is obscure and unknown to us in the things of religion, it is very certain that there are, as we have just remarked, various things which are unknown to us among those things in which religion is conversant. But those things which are unknown to us, make no part of religion. They have not been revealed to us. Since they continue to be unknown and concealed from us, they constitute no part of the revelation, which hath been granted us: they ought not, they cannot be the object of our faith.

4. If one understand by *mystery*, incomprehensible doctrines, there are no *mysteries* of this kind in revelation. It is even a contradiction to say that a doctrine is revealed, and that it is incomprehensible. To say that God reveals to us incomprehensible doctrines, is to say that he gives us ideas of things of which we can form no idea, and of which he does not really give us any idea. This is absolutely impossible. If there were doctrines of this nature in religion, it would be altogether impossible to believe them

them. For to believe a doctrine, is to connect the ideas which can be formed concerning this doctrine. But one has no idea of an incomprehensible doctrine; one cannot therefore connect the ideas which constitute this doctrine, nor consequently believe it.

One must make the same judgment concerning contradictory as concerning incomprehensible doctrines. It is a sort of pretended *mystery*, which cannot have place in a divine revelation. It is impossible that God, who is the author of our reason, should teach us by his word, things directly contrary to those which he teaches us by clear and evident reasonings. It would not even be possible for us to receive these kinds of doctrine. For to believe, as I have just said, is to connect ideas. Now the ideas that one pretends to unite in a contradictory doctrine, cannot be connected. They destroy one another. If one affirmed, for example, that one and the same body is at Paris and at Rome at the same time, it would not be possible to believe it. I may, indeed, through weakness, through complaisance, through the little attention which I give to what is proposed to me, say that I give my consent to this proposition: I can join together the words of which it is composed; but my mind cannot connect the ideas which these words express. It cannot connect the idea of a body existing at Paris at a certain time, with the idea of this same body existing at the same

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instant at Rome. In asserting that this body is at Rome, one denies that it is at Paris; in asserting that it is at Paris, one denies it to be at Rome. These two ideas, which one pretends to connect, destroy each other.

The principles which we have just laid down obviously suggest the following reflections on the conduct which we ought to observe with regard to mysteries.

1. It appears by what we have advanced, in what manner we ought to receive doctrines which men present to us under the idea of *mystery*: that if they give us clear ideas of what they are desirous we should believe, and make us evidently see that these ideas are contained in the word of God, we ought not to hesitate in receiving them, though they should be things, which our reason of itself could not have discovered to us. The scripture says, for example, that the dead must one day rise again. We easily form ideas of what the scripture has taught us in this regard. We ought to believe it, though our reason of itself cannot lead us to this truth. But if people propose to us as *mysteries*, doctrines that are incomprehensible or contradictory, we ought not to suffer ourselves to be dazzled with the specious title with which they clothe them. We ought to reject them without any scruple. It is not possible in truth to receive them. One must only examine carefully if the doctrine in question be in reality incomprehensible.

comprehensible. Sometimes this title is imprudently given to doctrines which are not of this order. For example, people say that the doctrine of the incarnation is incomprehensible, but they are mistaken. If it were, it could not be received. The doctrine is briefly this: That the Deity in a very intimate manner was united to the man Christ Jesus, inasmuch that one may regard all those excellent lessons which Jesus Christ communicated to mankind; all the astonishing and miraculous operations which he displayed before their eyes, as the language and actions of God himself, who was in him, who spoke by him, who acted by him, who manifested himself by him. Here is nothing but what is easily comprehended. It is true, one does not comprehend what was precisely the nature of this union of the Deity with humanity; but as we are not obliged to form distinct ideas of it, we are not obliged to believe what we do not distinctly comprehend of it.

2. It appears from what we have said, that it is injurious to accuse moderate divines of being enemies to *mysteries*. One may see by what we have advanced agreeably to their ideas, that they reject not those *mysteries* which in reality belong to religion. They acknowledge, in the strongest manner, that there are in the nature of God many things which transcend our weak capacity. They receive with devout regard

every thing which revelation hath added, which reason could not discover. But they do not blindly submit to the decisions of men, who would often vend those doctrines for mysteries, which have no other foundation but their own imaginations. It is against *these* pretended mysteries that they declare war, and not against *those* which religion contains. Penetrated with gratitude and esteem for the truths which the gospel teaches them, they cannot suffer that men should contaminate their sacred purity, by associating with them doctrines which are absurd, replete with difficulties and contradictions. One might with much more justice accuse the rigid divines with being enemies to *mysteries*. It is doing great injury to true *mysteries*, to unite with them, as they too often do, abstract speculations, loaded with difficulties and contradictions, which render religion contemptible, which make real mysteries to be questioned, which exhibiting religion under a disadvantageous form, weaken the esteem which men ought to cherish for it, and occasion doubts to arise concerning its credibility. Besides, it appears from the facility with which these divines pronounce on all kinds of subjects, that they own much fewer *mysteries* than those whom they reproach with being enemies to mysteries. Is it asked, for example, in what manner God hath predestinated mankind to salvation? A moderate divine will tell you, that the only thing that

that he knows upon this subject is, that God hath determined to save those who shall believe in Jesus Christ, and to condemn those who shall refuse to receive him. He will confess that he knows no more than this concerning it, that this affair is to him a *mystery*. But the rigid divine will not be content with such a concise account: he will gradually unfold to you all the most hidden secrets of this *mystery*: will tell you which is the *first* decree which God formed in this respect; which the second, and which the third, fourth and fifth. You would swear he had been one of the Almighty's cabinet council, so little is he embarrassed with this subject, and with such facility he pronounces on what creates to others the greatest difficulties. Is it enquired, what shall be the final condition of the heathens, who have not the happiness of knowing Jesus Christ? What shall be the everlasting state of those who have fallen into such and such an error? A moderate divine will say, that he leaves them to the equitable judgment of God, the sole legislator, who can save and who can destroy: he will say, that he hath not sufficient light to decide, in any peremptory manner, the fate of the erroneous: that this is to him a *mystery*. But a severe divine, far from adopting this *mystery*, will directly pronounce the sentence which they shall assuredly receive at the last day, and damn them all without mercy. An observer of characters will find, that the

moderate divine suspends his judgment on an infinite number of subjects, and freely owns that they are *mysteries* to him; whilst the rigid, by his temerity in determining every thing, annihilates divers *mysteries*, which the weakness of his understanding ought to make him acknowledge.

A third reflection which presents itself on this subject is, that the more mysterious a doctrine is, full of obscurity and difficult of comprehension, the less important it is to salvation. In effect, a doctrine is not important in religion, but in proportion to the influence it may have on our sanctification. But a doctrine, full of obscurity, cannot have but very little influence on our hearts. As it presents to us but few ideas, and those ideas very indistinct, it can make but a very slight impression upon us. One may even assert here, that if there were among the doctrines of religion, *mysteries* incomprehensible, these mysteries would be of no importance, that not presenting any distinct idea to our mind, they could not act upon it, nor, consequently, contribute to its sanctification and its happiness.

A fourth reflection which we ought to make here is, that one ought to be very circumspect in the judgments which one delivers concerning mysteries in religion. One ought to assert nothing but what reason and scripture teach us in a clear and accurate manner. To give here
free

free scope to imagination, to be eager to decide every thing, is to put one's self in evident danger of being deceived. One then walks in a dark region, one has no light to direct one's steps. If one refuses to stop, one runs a risk of wandering from the path, of stumbling every moment, and being precipitated into error.

Another reflection which naturally follows from our principles, is, that we ought to entertain great candour towards those who fall into any error with regard to *mysteries*. They are in truth guilty of imprudence and temerity. They are wrong in hazarding a decision on these matters, without having a sufficient light by which to form a clear judgment. But still the subjects, on which their opinions are erroneous, are very difficult; it is not easy to gain clear and exact ideas of them. The difficulty of the matter in question, requires that we would exercise indulgence and charity towards them. If the point were concerning things obvious and evident, on which it was easy to determine, one should have some reason to censure them for the bad use they made of their understanding. They have no excuse, who suffer themselves to be deceived on subjects which have nothing in them but what is simple and level to our capacity. But the more difficult a matter is, the more easy is it to be deceived in our judgments concerning it, and the more lenity and candour ought we to cherish towards those who have the

misfortune to wander from the truth, on subjects so susceptible of error and misapprehension.

Another reflection which we will add on this subject is, that they are not the difficult and abstract doctrines of religion, which ought to attract most of our attention and study. Such doctrines are but of little use and importance. Though we should meditate on them from morning to night, they would contribute but very little to the illumination of our minds, and the satisfaction of our hearts. We should become neither much wiser or much better. That which ought most to occupy us, is the meditation of those plain and clear truths which our religion contains. It is the study of these truths, which, by the light they diffuse in our minds, are efficacious in sanctifying our hearts: it is the study and practice of our duties: it is this which ought to constitute our principal study, and our principal employment. In this regard we ought to follow that excellent maxim recorded in Dueteronomy: *Secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, in order that we may observe all the words of this law.*

But men have too much passion for *mysteries* easily to acquire the moderation we here request of them. They will have *mysteries*, that may serve to occupy, to exercise, and call their genius forth. To cure them of this affection
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which they have for speculative doctrines, the contemplation of which is a very useless employment, one must point out to them subjects better suited to their capacities, and on which they may exercise their understandings with profit and advantage. Several of this kind one might indicate to them. There are, for example, in morality several nice and abstruse points, on which we can acquire but imperfect ideas. These are *mysteries*, into which it would be proper to make deep researches: it would be very useful to labour assiduously here, in order to gain precision and accuracy, that we may not be embarrassed on the part we are to take, when we shall find ourselves in situations which require a clear perception of these things. There are in the heart of man many depths which it would be useful for us frequently to sound. *The heart of man, says the scripture, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* In general we know ourselves but very imperfectly. We ought to labour to acquire as accurate a knowledge of ourselves as possible. One ought to endeavour to discover what is the situation of our hearts; what are the passions that commonly agitate it; what are the objects which make the deepest impression upon it, and which serve to excite these passions. One ought to endeavour to discover the vain illusions it cherishes, and by which it confirms itself every day in bad habits. These are

mysteries

mysteries of iniquity which merit all our attention.

There are in the different bodies which compose this universe, infinite vestiges of the wisdom of their Creator, which, through the slight attention which we pay to them, make no impression upon us. These are mysteries of nature which well deserve our most sedulous study. We ought to make it our highest entertainment to survey, in the various objects that surround us, the traces of divine skill which they exhibit to all attentive minds, in order to be elevated by these means to those sentiments of admiration which we ought always to cherish for the perfections of the supreme Being.

There are in the conduct which God hath observed in regard to his church, there are in the favours which he hath lavished on mankind by the mission of Jesus Christ, *mysteries of wisdom, of benevolence, of goodness, of holiness, of power*, which we can never sufficiently admire. St. Peter informs us, *that the angels themselves desire to look into these things*. We ought not to be possessed with less of this sacred ardour than they, in order to furnish ourselves with just ideas of the wisdom, goodness, and power, which God Almighty hath manifested in the great work of our salvation. We can never entertain ideas of it too exalted, or enter into all the sentiments of admiration and gratitude which are adequate to the benefits which
God

God has conferred upon us. What idea soever we form of the benevolence which God has testified to us by Jesus Christ, there will always be a great number of circumstances that will escape us, and which a second meditation will make us perceive. There will always be in the love of God mysteries, which will exercise our minds. We ought frequently to meditate on this important subject, in order to endeavour to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length, the depth and height of the love of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge. These are *mysteries*, very worthy our attention; which deserve much better to employ us than those abstract and metaphysical *mysteries* which exercise so unprofitably the understanding of divines, and produce so frequently acrimony, animosity, and divisions.

thought that I only adhered to my religion through prejudice; but now you have learned that I have not adopted it without knowing its principles. If I have characterised the Roman religion, I have painted its errors and its worship in rather lively colours, you are not ignorant that I distinguish it from the persons who profess it, especially from you, madam, whom I perfectly esteem and honour. My thanks, also, have not displeased you; it had the same motive which awakened your charity on thought me in danger, and I was willing to dissipate your alarms. What is intended

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TO A

LADY of DIJON,

In regard to the Doctrines of the Church

of Rome.

I AM very glad, madam, that you have been

edified by my answer. You might have

thought that I only adhered to my religion

through prejudice; but now you have learned

that I have not adopted it without knowing its

principles. If I have characterized the Romish

religion, if I have painted its errors and its

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for me. You thought me in danger, and I was

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mained

mained farther, except it was the testifying *mine* for you in my turn? After the generous example you have set me, could I interest myself too strongly in the most important concerns that respect you?

I make no doubt, though you have not told me, but you are perfectly acquainted with your catechism, and, as it is but of little significance to know it merely by heart, I farther believe that you have studied the proofs and principles of it. A Turk may be instructed in all the doctrines of his religion, and yet never once suspect his religion itself, because he hath less investigated it by his own particular examination, than blindly received it from the authority of his instructors.

Neither have you, madam, confined yourself merely to these elements. You are acquainted with the force of education, and the despotism of prejudices, which are imbibed with our nurse's milk. You have endeavoured, first of all, to secure to yourself a certain rule, independent of the authority of your particular teachers, and what they had taught you from your infancy you have not failed rigidly to compare with this rule. You knew it was not safe to rely solely on their word. If the director be a Jesuit, he may insinuate a lax morality: if a Jansenist, he awakens suspicions of heresy. At least it is in this manner the world speaks of both.

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Every true christian, therefore tries the spirits, otherwise if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the pit. The admonition comes from the best authority: it is the Saviour who gives it.

By this admonition you have profited, madam; and it is only after strict examination, worthy the importance of such a transaction, that at last you have taken and ought to take your party in religion. An examination indispensably necessary, and without which a person would be a Mahometan in Turkey, and a Pagan in China, with as much reason as he is a *Catholic* in France, and a *Papist* beyond the Alps.

I am only in pain with regard to the *rule* which you have followed; for if unfortunately it should prove false, you will only have built upon the sand: the structure of your faith will fall in ruins, and in that case it would undoubtedly be best to begin a different edifice.

With regard to mine, it is founded upon a rock; and I desire you, madam, to give yourself no distress upon this head. One may well repose this confidence in the sacred scripture, which continually offers itself to be a lamp to lighten our path. The same proofs which we have of its divinity convince us of the infallibility of this *rule*, always employed with success by the faithful, who were desirous to privilege themselves from human traditions and the
leaven

leaven of false teachers, had we other example but that of the Jews of Beræa.

They confronted the doctrines of the apostles with scripture, in order to judge which was right, whether the new comers or the Jewish teachers, who boasted of their sitting in the chair of Moses, and who alledged the antiquity of their church, the succession of their high-priests, their traditions, as the church of Rome now does.

But more prudent than the Jewish church, who permitted all the world to read the holy scripture, the church of Rome puts this lamp under a bushel. It flies the light of day, that would be detrimental to its interests. Did it allow the free use of the scripture, people at least would not find here the worship of images and relicks, the adoration of the wood of the cross, devotion to the Virgin, the sacrifice of the mass; above all, the religious honour of saints, and so many other practices, of which there is not the least trace in scripture, but which however are the capital articles of the church of Rome. Always jealous of this book as of an enemy, this church has put it in the *index expurgatorius* of prohibited boooks. She is always declining the attack; always fighting in retreat; always eluding by new distinctions, *absolute worship, and relative worship*; the *latria*, the *doulia*, and the *hyperdoulia*; expressions very proper to enlighten superstitious people: whilst the

word of God is certainly obscure, *thou shalt not bow down before images nor worship them.*

Since this is the case, had not a grave author, who was caressed by three popes, reason to say, in a work dedicated to Paul the third, that the affairs of the church would be in a better condition without the scriptures. Hence this language: That the scripture is a dead letter and a leaden rule: that God never intended that the church should depend on writings of paper and parchment: that traditions can support themselves without the authority of scripture; but that without the authority of the church, the scriptures would have no more authority than Æsop's fables. These are the serious and deliberate declarations of writers whom this very indulgent mother hath thought it her duty to honour with the purple. From amidst these impieties she knew how to separate their good intentions, which were to hold her true children in an holy and submissive ignorance.

Thus the abbé de la Trappe, that great reformer of the monastic life, tells us, as a most excellent anecdote, that Saint Theresa one day replied to a girl of understanding, who said she would bring her Bible to the convent: *We want neither you nor your Bible, we are poor ignorant souls who know only how to spin and obey.* O the pious state of persons who consecrate themselves to God! Ignorant religionists, but most excellent spinners, how could they miss of heaven!

In

In order to justify this conduct, you say, madam, that your church hath had *her reasons*. I am of your opinion. But in regard to the *great wisdom* of these reasons, pardon me, I intreat you, if here I presume to dissent from you. For this presumption I am sufficiently punished by the violence I do my own heart, which would with rapture adopt the same sentiments as you do. But a superior force deprives me of so great a satisfaction, and prevents me from seeing the wisdom of those reasons, unless one understand by *wisdom* the being more wise than God, who freely admits to the reading of his word both priest and people, men, women, and children without distinction. And the wisest of all kings informs us at the head of his Proverbs or maxims, that his principal-design is to *give discernment to the simple, and instructions to the young*.

How infinitely remote is this from that wisdom which the church of Rome adopts in her practice! "It would be difficult to believe, did not experience convince us of it, that there could ever have fallen into the mind of man a paradox as extraordinary as this, that the holy scripture of the Old and New Testament was given for no other purpose but to be read by priests and by persons well instructed in religion; and that the reading of it has always been interdicted, agreeably to the intention of God and of the sacred writers, to the common people among both Jews and Christians." These

are the very words of M. Dupin, a famous doctor of the Sorbonne, who afterwards demonstrates the contrary from scripture itself, and from the practice of Jews and Christians.

But you say, madam, is it an instance of great wisdom to put into the hands of young people, for example, the Song of Solomon, and to suffer the gross uninstructed herd, both of men and women to read the sublime and abstruse parts of St. Paul's Epistles? And ought one, madam, because the scripture has difficult passages, deprive the ignorant of every thing that is plain and clear in them? It is the duty of pastors to render the reading of the scriptures plain and easy to the common people, but it is sacrilege to attempt to ravish them out of their hands.

It is true the Song of Songs requires some previous preparations. Wherefore St. Jerom, after having advised a lady to make her daughter read all the books of scripture, and prescribed to her the order according to which she was to read them, adds, that she ought to reserve the Song of Solomon to the last, in order that she might the better be in a situation to comprehend the spiritual sense of it. This advice shews the good sense of that father; but does it follow from hence, that we ought to interdict to Christians the reading of this Bible? Quite the contrary.

The intention of St. Paul undoubtedly was, that his Epistles should be read by those to whom

whom he wrote them; and in all those which he wrote to the churches, he addresses himself to all believers in general. The Epistle to the Romans, which is the most abstruse, is directed not to teachers, but to *all who are at Rome*. Moreover, sometimes he exhorts them to admonish their own pastors of their duty. He even admits them as judges between himself and their teachers.

St. Chrysostom, madam, was not of your opinion. "I am extremely delighted, my brethren," says he in his first sermon on the Epistle to the Romans, and he addresses himself expressly to mechanicks, "I am extremely delighted to hear read in this city the Epistles of St. Paul. But my grief, amidst this joy, is to see such a number of people strangers to the writings of this holy apostle, which they ought not to be." He afterwards conjures them to apply themselves to the diligent perusal of his writings, notwithstanding their difficulties. "Seek, says he, and you shall find; knock at this gate and it shall be opened to you."

After all, the Epistles of St. Paul deserve as much to be read as the Bull of Clement the XI. in which celebrated bodies of men and institutions of literature find inextricable difficulties, to say no worse. Would you for this reason, madam, consent to suppress it too? As for the *Song of Solomon*, it is at least as good as the marriage of *St. Dominic* and of *Allen la Roche* with the holy Virgin, who comes and kisses them

very amorously ; with several other curious circumstances related by grave authors, which your church, so wonderfully scrupulous and vigilant, does not however deem it proper to interdict. The whole story is, in our days, re-published at Paris, and adorned with all the beauties of the French language, by the reverend father *P. Crasset*, with the approbation of his society and his archbishop, in order to be better adapted to the capacity and use of individuals.

You add, madam, that in a particular book are dispensed to them all those morsels of scripture which are proper for them to receive and digest. Yes, thus it is, that they give them the word of God mutilated and mangled, and not in the manner St. Paul directs : *Let the word of God in all its fullness dwell in you.* This is the text of a beautiful homily of St. Chrysostom, who exhorts his audience to read the scripture *all entire*. For, says he, regard no other master but the word of God, which you have in your hands. No man can instruct you, as this divine word doth : for oftentimes those to whom we address ourselves for instruction, hide from us many things. Attend, madam, to this last expression. In effect, have they put amongst those *shreds* you speak of, the second commandment of the law, and all the passages which clearly condemn the opinions of your ghostly directors.

But

But you reply, *It would be dangerous.* If you mean with regard to morals, thanks be to God, it is a thing still unheard of, that ever his word hath ever contributed to corrupt them. *Sanctify them,* said our Lord, *by the truth, thy word is truth.* Those who design to corrupt themselves, will certainly never apply to the holy scripture: and if any heart, by an unnatural perversion, should happen to convert for itself this manna into poison, is it just, is it wise, that an infinite number of good souls should be deprived of their most salutary nutriment?

Would it prove *dangerous* with respect to heresy? Here, madam, is the great fort in which you entrench yourself. Those, whom your church is pleased to style heretics, would multiply infinitely, and the precaution manifests great wisdom. But to this objection St. Chrysostom will reply with great seriousness. He had studied this matter thoroughly; and great experience, joined to great abilities, had taught him from what source the corruption of the mind as well as that of the heart was derived. "*Grant me then this which I ask from you,* said he to his flock, *and cherish, for the writings of St. Paul only, that passion which you have for money. For be assured, that it is from ignorance of the scriptures, as from a wretched fountain, that an infinity of evils hath flowed. It is from this that this crowd of heresies hath proceeded, that irregularity of manners, those unprofitable pur-*

suits, and all those frivolous amusements and vain occupations in which Christians are now engaged."

He elsewhere in a very spirited manner censures them, that they employed more pains to learn and retain the airs and songs of the theatre, than to read and meditate the word of God. Upon this he exclaims: "It is this which now ruins all, that you imagine that none but the religious ought to read the holy scripture." Does it not seem, madam, that this *moult of gold*, as his name imports, this oracle of the ancient church, intended to anticipate all your pleas? But he was far from foreseeing that in future time to neglect the scriptures would become a duty, and to prohibit the reading of them, a wise precaution. St. Augustin also thought very differently. In his Confessions he accuses himself for having embraced Manicheism, which was solely owing to their having told him in his youth not to read the scriptures: and if you are scared with the apprehension of heretics, he will tell you, that nobody ever availed themselves of that artifice. "If you will believe them, says he, the truth was not communicated by writing but the living voice. They strive to shelter their presumptuous imaginations under the pretext of our Lord's words, *I have many things yet to say to you*. They usually say, that the apostles did not reveal all things to all: that there are certain things which they declared in public,

public, but that they taught the rest in *private*, referring to what St. Paul says to Timothy, *Keep the deposit, or that which is committed to thee.*" Such was the method of all the ancient heretics, according to St. Augustin, who had particularly studied them: and that nothing might be wanting to the portrait which he gives us of them, it hath exactly happened that the new partisans of their method have understood by this *deposit*, the inexhaustible treasure of their traditions which they want to substitute for the scriptures. I leave you then to judge, madam, which of us two incurs the greater hazard of falling into heresies, meaning, as St. Augustin hath just defined them, the presumptuous imaginations of the human mind, which frames for itself a new rule, different from the word of God.

At last you advance, as though you made a great concession, that your bishops fail not to *permit* the reading of the scripture to all persons whom they know will do it without danger. How madam, merely *permit* it! That is not sufficient. A person, that heard you, would infer that this reading of the Bible is *permitted*, just as it is *permitted* one to go to a ball or read a romance; a privilege which is granted only to persons of approved virtue, and which one has a right to interdict to those who could not go without danger. But to *permit* here is nothing: one must, with St. Chrysostom, exhort people to it, to thunder

in their ears, to fulminate reproofs, to cry that every thing is lost. To prelates and preachers one cannot herein propose a better model than Chrysostom.

Do they speak from their pulpits as loudly as he? Like him, are they perpetually returning to the charge? "I exhort you continually, said he to them one day, and I will never cease to exhort you, not to content yourselves with hearing the instructions which are delivered here, but assiduously to read the sacred scripture when you are at your respective homes. I have always made it my endeavour to inspire this affection into those whom I have conversed with in private: and let no person alledge those excuses which are so ridiculous, so shameful, and so worthy of censure: my profession as a lawyer engrosses all my time; I am occupied in state affairs, I am a mechanic, I am a person involved in secular business; it is not for me to read the scripture, but for those who have renounced the world, and who lead a life suitable to such a situation. Poor man! what do you tell me? On the contrary, on account of these very occupations you have more occasion to read your Bible. For those persons, you mention, have not that need of this sacred aid; they are seated upon the shore out of all danger, they enjoy an happy security: but we, who live amidst the agitations and tempests of this life, we who are exposed to the necessity of incurring an infinite number

number of faults and follies, we have the utmost necessity of being always assisted and supported by the exhortation and consolations which we find in the sacred scriptures.

All the rest, madam, inculcate the same; and we might transcribe for you on this head a great number of the sermons of the ancient fathers. But is it thus they preach throughout the whole extent of your church, especially in Italy, where the church hath fixed the center of its unity, and where the common people scarce know that there is such a book as the Bible in the world. And how could they grant this liberty, after the commission decreed by the council of Trent, which hath prohibited the scriptures to certain persons, *because more harm would accrue to them than good*. Again, was there any just reason to flatter one's self that they would leave, at least, the discernment of this affair to the prudence of the bishops, if the explication of Clement VIII. had not taken from them the power of granting a licence to purchase, to read, or to keep Bibles printed in the vulgar tongue. They have taken care, madam, not to inform you accurately on this head. I know very well, that several of your bishops have but little faith as to these kinds of decrees; one must do them justice; but unhappily their number is very inconsiderable: and you cannot exculpate all the whole bulk of your church, which certainly on this point, as some even of
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your literati have demonstrated, deviate both from the express command of God, from the design of revelation, from the very nature and reason of the thing, from the advice of all the fathers, from the experience of all the faithful, and from the constant and universal practice of all ages : and this, without your church having the least appearance of reason, except perhaps her own particular interest, and for fear lest her additions or contradictions to the common law of Christianity should become palpable to the most ignorant and the most stupid*.

* There needs no other proof of what the author advances here, than the constitution *unigenitus*, in which pope Clement XI *condemns* these propositions of Father Quesnel: "That it is useful and necessary at all times, in all places, and for all sorts of persons indifferently, to apply themselves to the reading of the holy scriptures : that the obscurity of these sacred books will not excuse any layman whomsoever from reading them : that the knowledge of the mysteries of religion ought to be communicated indifferently to all of the tender sex by the reading of the inspired writings ; and that it is a fallacy to imagine the contrary : That not to permit the reading of the scripture in the vulgar tongue to all Christians without distinction, is to close the lips of the Redeemer which were opened to instruct them : that not to grant this reading of the scriptures to all indifferently, especially of the gospels, is to interdict the use of light to the children of light, and to cause them to suffer a kind of excommunication." It is true that the condemnation of these propositions appeared scandalous to the wisest and best of the church of Rome ; that a number of illustrious prelates in France appealed from this constitution ; and that the destiny of this bull is still undecided. But it is not less certain that this is the bull of the great oracle of Rome, and that it is received not only in Italy and Spain, but also in a great part of France, Germany, and several other states.

But

But my zeal transports me too far. The reason of my enlarging so much on this article, was because it is in effect the most important of our grievances. The question is not about a particular truth, but concerning the fundamental rule of faith. St. Chrysostom cried out that every thing was *lost* from the moment the scripture was neglected; and we, madam, should think that every thing was gained if the church of Rome gave it a free circulation. Truth would spread of itself, whilst disputes produced only the spirit of dividing from it.

I am then in perfect security with regard to my rule. Let us now consider, madam, if you can say the same for yours, that is, for the verdict of that church of which the pope is the visible head: that church, according to you, *against which the gates of hell will never prevail, and which, with whatever waves it be agitated, will always triumph over truth*—you meant to say, *over error*. It has indeed triumphed over the truth by means of *keeping it unrighteously in captivity*, to use an expression of St. Paul.

I see, however, madam, and I see it with pleasure, that you have, at least, occasion for the scripture to prove the infallibility of your church. But if particular individuals cannot be assured of this fundamental principle but by reading it themselves, and by examining with care whether it be clearly contained in them, whence comes it that they hide this book from
them

them with so much precaution? Is it not this to give occasion to suspect that it is with the church of Rome as it is with those fictitious and self-created nobility, who boast their great titles, but take care never to exhibit them to the world!

In effect, in these words of Jesus Christ, *that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his church*, would every person clearly and distinctly see here a promise made to the Romish church rather than to the Greek church, which, since the great schism, regards the Romish as a limb severed from her own body, and who alledges also the succession of her bishops from the apostles, and particularly from Peter, the founder of the church of Antioch, without speaking of oecumenical councils, which were always held within her bosom, and whither the Latins themselves repaired to draw forth the truth? Every body would only see that Jesus Christ here makes a promise to HIS church; and that in order to know whether the church of Rome be really the church of Jesus Christ, one must confront the doctrine of this church with the doctrine which Jesus Christ hath left us in the scripture. By this method, madam, you would necessarily come back to my rule.

Would every body manifestly see in these words a promise made to the visible church, to the pope and cardinals, rather than to the invisible church, *composed only of good people*, for this
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is the definition St. Augustin hath given of the church of Jesus Christ? Would every person clearly behold here the promise of a visible and infallible tribunal, as if Jesus Christ had no other method of supporting his church against the gates of hell? Why do I say, every person—Would the keenest eye have ever descried, or even suspected, in these words such a promise, if the church of Rome, after having opened wide the gates of tradition, through which a crowd of errors and inventions have entered, had not availed itself afterwards of this interpretation, unknown to all the ancient fathers, in order the better to shelter its innovations under the holy cloak of a pretended infallibility.

But let us suppose, for a moment, that Jesus Christ had promised to his church a visible and infallible tribunal; how could we know where this infallibility resides; whether it is, for example, in the pope or in the councils? and it is of so much the greater import to know this, as the whole truth of the Romish religion depends upon it. For you do not appear, madam, to be of the opinion of that good catholic, who declared, that for his part, he was never embarrassed by questions of this sort; it sufficed him that infallibility was some where or other *incog.* in the church. With regard to myself, I cannot sit down contented with this same *incog.* residence; it would incessantly expose me to danger, either to receive as divine what is not so, or

to reject as human what is divine; or indeed, which is little better than either, to remain perpetually in doubt; all three the greatest crimes a person can commit in matters of religion, and which would be inevitable as long as the seat of infallibility is unknown. Now Jesus Christ hath not ordained it either in direct or indirect terms; and the church of Rome herself, who hath decided contrary to his authority a number of things in which she ought not to have interfered, hath never dared to fix a point so necessary and so important. For if her decision had been, that the pope is the infallible rule of faith, the Gallican church, which thinks it possible for his holiness to err, would be heretical: and if her determination were, that a general council is the sole infallible rule, to which one might appeal from all the arbitrations of the pope, the pope himself, with all his divines, would be an heretic and even the greatest of all heretics, since he would ostentatiously pretend to be the infallible rule of faith, and, not content with deceiving himself on this head, would infallibly deceive all those who should have recourse to him as an infallible oracle. Every time then that the Gallican church and the pope shall differ, what party shall you and I espouse? We shall say perhaps, that they dispute about questions which do not concern us. But if it happen that they reciprocally charge one another with maintaining propositions that
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are scandalous, heretical, blasphemous, or which even overthrow the love of God, morality, piety, and religion; then, how little soever we have at heart our salvation, you will acknowledge, madam, that it is high time to think for ourselves, and to choose at least between the Gallican church, who, *according to her custom*, would appeal to a general council, and the pope, who would treat this appeal with *abomination*. Here, as our principles would be different, we should separate perhaps one from another; a separation which would be attended on my side with infinite regret. Worthy daughter of the Gallican church, you would repose on her bosom and wait the decision of a general council. As for myself, how profound soever the veneration which I have always expressed for her, notwithstanding her exterior union with the church of Rome, yet as the evil would be urgent, and futurity very uncertain, my only recourse would be to the rule of rules, *to the law and to the testimony*. To those words of our Lord, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, I would reply, Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth: and if in his instructions I still found any difficulty, at least I might expect from his grace a relief to my scruples, and a succour which I should hope in vain to derive from men.

Thus, madam, without having recourse either to the pope, who gives ænigmatical bulls, and
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will not vouchsafe the explanation; or to a council, which perhaps would never convene, or assemble too late, I take the shortest and properest path to give my conscience true repose. And what is admirable in this conduct, is, that by not recurring to the pope as to an infallible judge, I follow the advice of the Gallican church; and by not applying to a general council, I follow the judgment of the pope. Can I do better, in order to do justice to them both, than pronounce, on one side, induced by the arguments of the Gallican church, that the pope is not infallible; and declare also on the other, influenced by the pope's reasons, that neither are general councils infallible! Would you wish me, madam, on the first point, to be more a catholic than the Gallican church; and on the second, to be a better papist than the pope himself?

I do not well know how you can reconcile all this: but whilst I am waiting for a better expedient, permit me, madam, always to follow my rule, whose infallibility neither the one nor the other can contest; and to make you see, by taking all the other articles of your letter, that if this rule is infallible, it is not less easy to make the application of it.

In general, whosoever will read the scripture, will certainly not find there either devotion to the Virgin, or religious homage paid to saints, or the worship of images and relicks, or the adoration

oration of the wood of the cross, or the refusal of the eucharistic cup, or purgatory and its dependencies, or traditions which he must follow independently on the word of God, or such a number of other practices in which the church of Rome makes almost all her religion to consist, and which, even in the opinion of her own divines, are not prescribed in the sacred books. I should desire nothing farther to justify my disapprobation of it: but there is a circumstance even farther than this; it is, that these same practices are directly contrary to the express commands of God; and I do not see, madam, that you satisfactorily exculpate it from this charge.

You complain that the world imputes a great number of things falsely to your religion. But are those missals and hymns, which it authorizes, among these false imputations, in which she is thus addressed: *O queen of heaven, I beseech you pardon my crimes, for against you alone have I sinned!* Are those applications, which are made to the Virgin, false imputations, which we meet with in the *Psalter* of Cardinal Bonaventure, and in the *Bible of Mary* by Albert the Great, where every the most exalted and incommunicable perfection which the scripture attributes to the Supreme, is ascribed to her.

Among these false imputations are there those titles of goddess and divinity, which are given her by a great number of authors, for the most

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even by Jesuits, who should be well skilled in their religion? St. Antony of Florence, and Bernard of Bustis, wish even that she might be styled the Goddess of Goddeses. Are those extravagant devotions false imputations, which are however authorized by the popes? witness the famous Bull called *Sabbatina*, which was given by John XXII. in favour of the Carmelites: devotions, recommended by the saints, whom the church invokes, by the devotees, by cardinals, by monks and learned doctors, whose writings she approved and tolerated at the time that she extended her vigilance so far as to prohibit the Bible to the people: all celebrated writers, faithfully cited by the Jesuit Craffet, in a book printed at Paris in 1679, with the privilege and approbation of his society, where you will see, madam, that *your* devotions to the Virgin is very different from *theirs*. In fine, among these false imputations are there those facts of public notoriety, which every where strike your sight, even in the streets and common paths, principally in Spain and Italy, where the people forget God, to think of nothing but their Madona; and where, in their solemn services, the genuflections and acclamations of the crowd, are all directed to her statue, without any regard for the holy sacrament, if by chance it pass by them. And all this even in Rome itself, and under the eye of the holy father, the vicar of Jesus Christ, the common father of all the faithful,

faithful, and who undoubtedly is not ignorant what ought to be their true devotion.

I expected indeed, madam, that a person of your intelligence, and whom I discriminate from her church, would blame such devotion as that of a brave officer, who said he confided more in the mercy of the Virgin than in that of Jesus, which for a military man was placing his safety very wretchedly. But in reality this his security he had in common with an infinite number of people. You may be convinced of it every day by ocular demonstration. For, without mentioning those eight or nine ecclesiastics who applauded the captain for his *rational piety*, he said nothing but what St. Antony of Florence and Anselm have expressed in other words, namely, "That the Virgin, as being a woman, is more merciful to sinners, and more familiar than Jesus Christ: that God is only father of the righteous, but that she is the mother of sinners." Other authors, cited with great eulogies by father Crasset, say, "That if any one thinks himself aggrieved by the justice of God, he may appeal from it to the Virgin, who can obtain every thing, even to the cancelling the arrests of condemnation." That a man condemned by the Son is saved by the Mother; and tho' he should be on the verge of hell, if the Virgin take him under her protection, she will deliver from his despair." Others go farther, and leave out *on the verge*. In effect, all the

chronicles of the Virgin relate a number of examples of profligate wretches, whom she had plucked from the fangs of devils, because they had been her devotees, and had often said their Ave Maria.

But this devotion, as you judge it to be, madam, were it a thousand times more pure, if one may thus speak of a thing, which God hath not commanded, it will always prove as it has hitherto done, a stumbling block to people, who do not narrowly survey these things. As soon as superstition hath overleaped the bounds of revelation, it thinks every thing to be freely permitted to it, because having no longer any rule, it knows not where to stop. To the adoration of the Virgin it joins the worship of an infinity of saints, known or unknown, it matters not. Nor is this all; it passes to the worship of their reliques and images: and the great incongruity I observe in all this, is, that the attention being thus scattered among such a variety of objects, the great and good God is but very badly served.

“ But what inconsistency is there, you reply, madam, in praying to the Virgin and the saints to be our intercessors with God, as we beseech the faithful upon earth to implore his mercy for us?” You have already urged too much in favour of this intercession; it will be better to drop the subject entirely. Amidst this crowd of saints there are a great number whom nobody knows
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any thing of, but whom the church of Rome ever retains. They ask favours of them, in several of their hymns or prayers, absolutely, directly, and not by way of simple intercession.

In honour of them they consecrate temples and altars. They every day sacrifice to their honour the only begotten Son of God. All is full of their reliques or of their images: these they kiss devoutly, burn incense in honour of them, prostrate themselves before them, go pilgrimages to the more eminent of them, expect cures from them, or rain, or good weather. Nor is it the populace only who does this; it is the clergy who are at the head of the people, and who conduct them with much pomp and solemnity. Behold here a wonderful apparatus in order to beseech men, as we beseech them upon earth! Was there ever such ceremony as this performed for any living believer in the world?

It is certain that the Pagans never did as much for their demi-gods or deified heroes: at least they never parted and severed the bodies of their heroes, to take, one a foot, another the head, another the shoulder, hand, or arms, in order to place them on their altars, to incense, kiss, and venerate them. They never had magazines of reliques in which were repositied hair, the ends of girdles, shifts, veils, old rags, and other things of this kind, in order to go down on their knees before them and expose them to the veneration of people.

I appeal to your understanding, madam, are these the worshippers whom God requires, these the worshippers in spirit and truth? Let this be *doulia*, as you express it, and not *latria*, words we do not understand, and the people understand less; is this a sufficient reason to justify this devotion, and to sanctify all the exterior of it? A wise cardinal relates that it required twenty-eight chariots full of the bones and reliques of martyrs, to purify the old Pantheon, when they dedicated it to our Lady; and with regard to myself, I fear not to assert, that, with all the arguments in the world, the church of Rome can never wash pollution off that strange worship she pays to saints, and, which is worse, obliges men to pay them on pain of being anathematized.

Was it then that she apprehended, that without so rigid a command, the zeal of the people would not have sufficient fervor; and that by a distinction as clear as that between *doulia* and *latria*, she could prevent this zeal from degenerating into superstition? But when they see all this pomp, and all this religious apparatus in honour of the saints; this express order for invoking them, those prayers which they address to them oftner than to God, those temples and altars consecrated to them, those sacrifices offered, those incensings, genuflections, &c. what must the people really think? Will they then imagine that the church, that assembly which they deem
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so wise and so infallible, hath accumulated such an infinite number of ceremonies, and of ceremonies similar to those which are employed in the worship of God, merely to teach people that they ought to beseech glorified saints, just as they beseech living believers on earth? On the contrary, will they not think, they, who do not judge of things but by their external éclat, will they not think that so grand an assemblage of religious ceremonies must have some extraordinary meaning which corresponds to their dignity? Will they not be naturally led into mistakes in this confused or distinct estimation which they form of them, and to regard the saints in some measure as God himself? If you refuse me credit here, madam, at least you will believe a good Spanish catholic, Ludovicus Vives, who would have said more on this subject, if he had lived in a country of liberty. "Several Christians, says he, sin in a good cause: they serve the saints, both male and female, in the same manner as they serve God: for I do not see, he adds, that many among them have an opinion of the saints different from what the Pagans had of their Gods." The church of Rome therefore is responsible for all the consequences which a worship so dangerous may have, and which in effect it hath had: for in the opinion even of her own learned divines, this worship is not commanded in scripture; and with all the plausible distinctions with which they

have afterwards attempted to gloss it, does nothing but spread perpetual snares for the ignorance and simplicity of the people.

What I have said of the worship of saints and their reliques, applies of itself to the service of images, and to the adoration of the wood of the cross. But you say, madam, that you honour images only as simple representations which lead you to imitate the originals, and that you do not regard the wood of the cross but as a venerable symbol which serves to call to your remembrance our blessed redemption. Permit me here again to distinguish betwixt yourself and the church of Rome, and to the singular esteem I have for your genius and person allow me to add this new mark of honour, which is, that I believe you to be more rational than your church. Is it then that she prescribes nothing more, and that images, as well as the wood of the cross, are not so much the objects of worship which she ordains, as useful means which she employs to elevate us to the originals? If this is the case, she ought to reform her Breviary, where she addresses herself to the cross, distinguishing it from the crucified person, "O holy cross, thou art worthy alone to carry the ransom of the world. Precious wood, who bearest the nails and the dear burden, save the people here present!" She ought to reform her Pontificate which says, that the worship of *Iatria* is due to the cross; and one ought to offer incense to

* *Iatria* — the pure worship of God. *

to images, kiss them, prostrate one's self before them with all possible humiliation. She ought to reform those prayers in which an image is thus addressed: "O God, sanctify this figure of the Virgin, that she may yield us salutary aid," &c. Above all, she ought to reform that prayer, which has a pope for its author, and in which this devout address is made to the image of Jesus Christ impressed on an handkerchief: "Let it please thee to purify us from every blemish: blessed image of the face of Jesus Christ, shed thy light into our hearts. Conduct us, most blessed figure, into our own country!" She ought to reform the second council of Nice, confirmed however by that of Trent, which not only commands the veneration but the adoration of images, and moreover fulminates anathemas against every person who shall only doubt of their right to be adored. She ought to reform her calendar, and erase from the number of saints, whom she appoints to be invoked, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, who have taught, "That we owe to an image as much honour as to the original; and likewise the worship of *latria* to the images of Jesus Christ, as that of *doulia* to images of the saints." She ought to reform and rescind the approbations given to an infinite number of divines, professors of theology, bishops, cardinals, devotees, who have followed the doctrine of St. Thomas, or who have made only a slight alteration

tion of it, as the great Bellarmin and others, but ever retain it as the distant and universal doctrine of the church, "That the images of the saints ought to be venerated not only for *accidental* but also for *essential* qualities, so that they should be the *ultimate* objects of veneration, being considered in *themselves*, and not merely in as much as they represent. In fine, she ought to reform the general practice of people, and even of their pastors, who with public notoriety do much more than regard images merely as simple representations which elevate us to originals: otherwise, why consecrate them with so much ceremony, carry them in procession, dress them, incense them, kiss them, salute them, offer to them vows, expect miracles and cures from them? Why prostrate themselves before them, contrary to the divine prohibition, the most express that words can convey? Cannot one elevate one's self to the originals, without throwing one's self prone on the ground before their images, be the distance ever so great at which we plainly discern them? Why fulminate anathemas so furiously against people, who solemnly declare that they cannot in conscience violate the second commandment? Here there is verily a great deal of noise for nothing, if the church never designed that images should be any thing but simple representations: and at the same time very little illumination, since all this immense number of religious ceremonies,

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far from making the image a step to mount to the original, become true shackles, which fetter us inevitably to the material object. Of what good, in effect, is all this apparatus, if images are nothing but simple models of instruction? Could not the church make them serve for this purpose, without serving them themselves with so much parade? Of what good are all those pilgrimages, and that general concourse of devotion to one image rather than to any other? Do not the people believe that the image or saint will be well pleased with a service so painful, and which is ever paid at the expence of true and solid piety? Where then is the wisdom of this infallible church, who proposes to herself in all this a view so extremely limited and even useless to the learned, whilst on the other hand she ordains or tolerates an exterior so pompous, which serves to no other end but abusing the ignorant? And could any person, madam, under pretence of defending it, make out its trial and condemnation more exquisitely than you do?

You alledge that the bishop of Meaux exhibits the same view of it. But what idea soever I entertain of his abilities, it is not in my power to believe contrary to the testimony of my own eyes, or to submit more to his authority than to that of an infinite number of learned divines, especially of St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure. From whom should I learn the sentiments

sentiments of the church, if not from the saints whom she invokes, rather than from the bishop of Meaux, to whom perhaps she will never give this honour? Besides, it is well known that for a great many ages the catholic world styles reservedness and backwardness for image worship, the *heresy of the French*, who, during several centuries, rejected the second council of Nice; and who, I do not know by what fatality, are almost always the last to receive the decisions of the church. Who is there will warrant me that the good bishop of Meaux does not discover here some remains of the old heaven? Those approbations, you reply, are a sufficient warrant, which you see at the beginning of his book. But to shew you, madam, that they prove not his orthodoxy, at least on this article, behold here is a fact rather extraordinary, with which perhaps you are unacquainted. There is amongst these approvers an illustrious name, M. Capisucchi, who shared the favours of the court of Rome; and who in a book as amply furnished with approbations as this of the bishop's, maintains this position as the true doctrine of the church, "That one ought to pay the same worship to images as to the original; and that the image of Jesus Christ is worshipped with the adoration of *latria*, that of the Virgin with the adoration *hyperdoulia*, and that of saints with the adoration of *doulia*. But whilst the bishop of Meaux rather advances his own particular

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opinion, M. Capisucchi authorises his sentiment by the sanction of an infinite number of divines ; so that if this was not the sentiment of the church, one could never know her sentiments on any subject whatever. " It is a thing, says this Italian, which is never disputed, and which it is impossible to contest, that to the images of the most holy Trinity, to those of Jesus Christ, and of the most holy cross, there is paid the worship of *latria*," namely, madam, this same worship of *latria*, with which, as you declare, we falsely charge the church of Rome, and which you confess yourself would be idolatry. However this same M. Capisucchi is found in the list of the approvers of the bishop of Meaux's book, and which circumstance gives birth to scruples which are not inconsiderable. Either M. Capisucchi approved this book contrary to his own real sentiments, or he thought this was only a pious fraud, the better to convert us, and a salutary illusion, designedly palmed upon us, to which it was proper to give weight and solidity by a pretended approbation, for which we would profess even our highest obligations to him, the moment our eyes should be opened. Each of these two roads is prodigiously rugged—for how could a prelate of the bishop of Meaux's merit and honour avail himself of such a testimony? God forbid that I should interpose my judgment in a question so delicate and abstruse. The debate is between
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these two divines. It is no concern of mine.

I will only tell you, madam, that this book, to which you refer me for all the rest, and which was published with circumstances and with views of which you are not ignorant, is less an exposition than a palliation of the catholic faith, which he labours to bring as near as possible to ours. This does us honour: falsehood often disguises itself, but truth never assumes the colours of falsehood. Thus the book of the bishop of Meaux does not regard us, but it is an excellent one for his church, for whose use it was calculated: and it is not so much a formal apology, as excuses that he makes for us. We are very well disposed to admit them, provided that these are excuses and not commands.

In fine, madam, does the church of Rome pretend to be wiser than Hezekiah the pious king of Judah, so commended in scripture, who seeing that the people offered incense to the brazen serpent, through whose means the Deity had worked a great number of miracles, nevertheless cut it in pieces? He destroyed what Moses, the great legislator of the Jews, had raised by an express command of God.

I pass to your abridging the laity of the sacramental cup. To justify this, madam, you alledge as the first reason, that the church is wiser and more enlightened than our authors. I believe this escaped you. The council of Con-
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stance thus speaketh : “ Though Jesus Christ administered this venerable sacrament to his disciples under two kinds, and in the primitive church they administered the same to the faithful ; NEVERTHELESS the council declareth, ordereth, and determineth, that the cup be denied to the laity.” Our authors are then Jesus Christ and his apostles ; to whom I will add, for form’s sake only, the primitive church, since the holy council permits me to do it : and can you, on this subject, madam, put a question, whether our authors are wiser and better instructed than your church ? I never doubted it, and I hope for the future you never will. It is true she hath alledged her reasons, drawn principally from the inconvenience and indelicacy of a beard on this occasion : but does it belong to us to wish to be more wise or better enlightened than Jesus Christ ; and rather than violate so explicit a command, would it not be better to cut off this same beard which was not of divine institution ? But you reply, *we* take away the cup too from those who have an aversion to wine. What a difference in the two cases ! Must one prohibit the whole world from hearing the word of God, under pretence that there are deaf people who cannot hear it ? It is not we who in such a singular case take away the cup, but nature, which refuses it. This omission is exempt from blame, both with regard to him who administers the communion, and to him who receives

receives it : the one does what he ought, the other what he can : whilst in the church of Rome, both the priest and the communicant offend God, the one by denying the cup, the other by acquiescing in this denial. But, still you say, it is of no signification, since with the living body one receives his blood which flows in his veins. In the name of God, madam, let us not cavil with our Saviour ! *men* have never derived any good from cavilling. He commands us to *eat* and to *drink*, and you assert, that nobody drinks when he is *only* eating. Rather even than believe that Jesus Christ, the apostles, and primitive church had done an useless thing in administering the cup to the faithful, I would rather choose to say, that they did not then believe that they received the fleshy body of Christ under the appearance of bread.

Moreover, madam, we both of us harmonize, though for very different reasons, in the judgment we form of one another, you of me, and I of you, on the subject of transubstantiation. Because I had not mentioned it, you imagined I believed; it and the reason of my silence concerning it was, doubts I entertained of your belief of it. We have here a very great genius, who hath proved that it is not possible to believe it, provided, that by *believing* we understand something more than pronouncing words without ideas, as a man would do who should say, “ I believe
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a square circle, or, I believe six feet long occupy only a single point." The interpretation which the church of Rome gives to those words: *This is my body*; that is according to her doctrine, *this bread is transubstantiated into my body*, is far more extraordinary than the sense we give to them after Tertullian and St. Augustin, who say in express terms, *This bread is the symbol of my body*, in the same sense as it is said, *the rock was Christ*, or, *this cup is the New Testament in my blood*. The fathers, as well as your great divines, madam, among whom one may reckon popes, as Innocent III. and Pius II. have understood the other passage which you cite, *Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, shall have eternal life*, only of a spiritual eating and drinking: and the thing speaks for itself, for corporeal eating cannot procure eternal life. In fine, it is so far from being true that transubstantiation was taught by the sacred authors, that your most celebrated divines have confessed, that it was a doctrine of the church and not of the scripture. The famous Duns Scotus, who by way of eminence is called the *subtil doctor*, says in direct terms, "That there is no passage in scripture explicit enough to oblige a man to believe transubstantiation." Occham says, "That the opinion, according to which the *substance* of the bread *always remains*, has nothing contrary to the canon of the scriptures." The cardinal D'Ailli asserts precisely

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the same thing : he even adds, “ That this opinion is more rational than any other.” There is nothing in the gospel, says cardinal Cajetan, which obliges us to explain those words, *this is my body*, in a literal sense, and adds, that one may understand them in the same sense, as it is said, *The rock was Christ*. “ Transubstantiation, says the cardinal Contarin, does not appear from the sacred writings.” Canus, bishop of the Canaries, says that “ every thing which appertains to faith, is not expressly denoted in scripture ; witness, adds he, the transmutation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.” Biel says the same thing ; and adds, neither can one prove it by reason. Bassolis, another celebrated doctor, owns that they are not the words of Jesus Christ, *this is my body*, which induce him to believe transubstantiation. In fine, cardinal Bellarmine, after having declared his opinion that he found it in the Bible, yet, as if he mistrusted it, says, “ One may hesitate with reason, whether it be really found there, since so many wise and able men, Duns Scotus in the first place, have believed the contrary.” Since then, madam, geniuses possessed of such discernment, prepossessed as otherwise they were in favour of this doctrine, have yet not been able to discover it in the scripture, how is it that we other heretics, who have not eyes as good as they have, should be able to descry it there:—we, to whom all the five senses of nature

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ture, as well as the scripture and reason unanimously attest the contrary!

One ought no longer to be surpris'd that the catholic divines, in order to support their sentiments, should have framed a new rule, different from the holy scripture; nor even that several among them have spoken rather disrespectfully of this sacred book, so as even to rank it very much below what they call tradition, which is almost always uncertain; at least, which never mounts high enough, as it would be easy, madam, to convince you, by resuming all the articles of your letter. But this is not the present object, and it is better to reply to what you do me the honour to tell me on the credit of another, that we have at Geneva an old Bible, which would demonstrate to me the dishonesty of our ministers, and the falsifications which they have wilfully committed in the translation of the New Testament. It is true, we have here a very old Vulgate, but it certainly is not favourable to the church of Rome. There are too some small differences between the Vulgate and the version of Geneva, which have arisen from the diversity of Greek copies. But it is certain, and on both sides agreed, that these trivial variations do not absolutely affect any one point that is controverted between the church of Rome and us. The Vulgate version, of which I am speaking, is expos'd to the view of the whole world on a desk. He who chooses

may see it in the public library. He who told you, madam, that it favoured your religion, has been certainly very ill informed, and he ought at least to alledge some proof of it. He might have done it without taking the pains of coming hither, since this Vulgate being the same as that which is, or ought to be, in the churches of Dijon, nothing was easier than to mark those passages which the translation of Geneva hath falsified, and on which, according to this person, depends the decision of our controversies. Persons of honour ought never to hazard such imputations without proof. There may be some faults in our translation, as there also are in the Vulgate, in the opinion of the council of Trent and of the popes themselves, who a long time ago issued orders for the correction of it—but without effect—so extreme is their negligence about every thing which regards the word of God. But once more, this is not what we are now discussing. The question is to know, if our translation has falsified the controverted passages, and those which justify our separation. Now I maintain that the charge is one of the most false and the most repugnant to our character. Your divines, madam, may indeed teach us to respect their traditions, but it assuredly is our part to teach them to respect the scripture. Supposing that our ministers had been willing to falsify it, it was not in *their* power to effect it. The laity amongst us have

ever valued themselves upon studying the Greek language to have the pleasure of reading the New Testament in the original: and nothing is more common than to have and to read in our families the New Testament of P. Amelotte, or that of Port Royal. Whatever translation it be, whether the version of the Jesuits, or that of Martianay, a Benedictin, or that of M. de Marolles, or that of father Simon, or that of Louvain, it imports little to us. We refuse none, so much confidence have we in the goodness of our cause.

After things so important, I can hardly assume the courage, madam, to speak to you concerning Purgatory, which you endeavour to prove by pure reasoning. I could wish you had made me clearly see it in the scripture, and that you had especially proved that it is not injurious to the merit which is attributed to the death our Saviour. In effect, to what purpose is this pretended purgatory, if Jesus Christ, according to the constant language of scripture, has made, once for all, by his blood, an entire purification of our sins? Behold the reason of it. It is, that purgatory, though it be solely an invention of the church of Rome, is yet so important an appendage of it, that if one attempted to remove it, the whole machine would totter and shake to its center. On this basis are founded the prayers for the dead, the masses,

the pilgrimages, the greatest part of the popular devotions, and, principally, the rich treasure of indulgences, which are to the court of Rome an inexhaustible mine of gold and silver, and of which it makes a scandalous traffic in all places of its dominion, especially to the Indies, where all individuals are obliged to take them, each according to his abilities, at so much a year.

To conclude, it is not possible, madam, in an affair of this nature but there must escape things a little vehement, and expressions a little warm. If I have incurred this with regard to you, you must, if you think proper, complain of the scripture which is the source whence I have drawn my authorities, of the authors whom I have quoted, who are all of them persons whom you follow, venerate, and respect in your church; in fine, of the love of truth which we mutually endeavour to explore. I wish it was in my power to manifest it to a person whom I sincerely honour, and, permit me to repeat it, whom I never confounded with the church of Rome. I cannot, and I ought not excuse myself from pointing out the errors of this church; but were they a thousand times greater, I would not fail, throughout my whole life, to render the profoundest homage to your virtues. God grant that the prejudices, in which you have been educated, may not prevent you from seeing

ing and acknowledging these errors—an event which cannot indeed happen without a kind of miracle, so omnipotent and invincible is the force of prejudices!

I have, madam, the honour to be

Your most obedient and devoted servant,

M. ABAUZIT.



OF THE
CONSEQUENCES
OF THE
FIRST TRANSGRESSION.

IT is a rule dictated by good sense, authorised by custom, and is the fundamental canon of all scriptural interpretation, that when the words of a text, taken in the letter, give a clear, easy, natural meaning, we ought to adhere to the literal sense, as the only true one, and that it is not necessary to have recourse to the figurative sense, unless the literal contain some absurdity: still less ought we to search for the figurative in order to

find a marvellous, strange, unusual meaning, while the literal is self-evident, and presents nothing to the mind but what is natural and conformable to our most common ideas.

I directly apply this rule to that menace which God denounced to Adam: "The day that thou eatest this fruit, thou shalt die." Words, which at first sight present this meaning, which is natural and conformable to the style of all legislators; The day that thou eatest of this fruit, thou shalt die a violent death: but which by no means signify that if Adam had continued in the state of innocence, he would never have died, not even a natural death. One might indeed infer this last sense by a theological consequence, in previously supposing that *natural death* is a punishment of sin, and not a consequence of the general laws of nature. But in good truth it must be acknowledged, that this sense is not explicitly expressed in the menace, which plainly says, "The day that thou eatest of this fruit, thou shalt die;" which denotes a violent and premature death: for every time that legislators issue any prohibitions, under pain of death, they never understand a natural death, to which all men, innocent and guilty, are equally subjected. Instead of this, custom, on these occasions, hath constantly annexed to the term *death*, the idea of a violent death, which was closely to follow the transgression of the law, as this

this menace expressly imports : the day that thou eatest this fruit, that day shalt thou die.

How simple and literal soever this explication be, it is not, however, relished by the divines ; and the reason is, perhaps, because it is too plain, that it hath not merited their approbation. See in what manner they explain the menace. So long as thou dost not eat of this fruit, thou shalt never die ; and whatever hurtful effects second causes may produce, I will eternally prevent them acting upon thee : but the moment thou shalt eat this fruit, I will surrender up thy body to their impressions, which shall gradually bring on death. Nor shall this prove the only punishment which thou shalt draw upon thee, since thou shalt only lose the life of thy body, in order to suffer eternally in thy soul, thou and thy posterity, of whom thou art here the representative, and to whom I will impute all thy disobedience ! See here what divines have discovered in this short and mysterious threatening : the day that thou eatest of this fruit, thou shalt die. You have here a specimen of their usual manner : They first frame to themselves a system, which they connect together with as much acuteness as is possible for them, and then with this preparation they sit down to explain the scriptures, where they fail not to discover all the ideas which are become familiar to them by long meditation.

Now,

Now, with all the respect that is due to them, I say that the sense, which they give to this threatening, is extraordinary, strained, far-fetched, contrary to the usage of all legislators, contrary to the text of scripture; without speaking of the clause which involves the posterity of Adam in everlasting misery, and which seems not to have been inserted, against all justice, in this interpretation, but in order to give a greater roundness and regularity to their system.

In the first place, it supposes miracles, which neither Moses or any sacred writer have mentioned; miracles without end, which every moment suspend the general laws of nature, in order to prevent second causes from prejudicing the body of Adam and Eve, on condition they preserved themselves in their state of innocence.

In the second place, it is contrary to the style of lawgivers, who by death, with which they threaten the violators of their laws, have never understood, as I have remarked, any thing but a violent and premature death: for it is equitable, that a menace be conceived in terms the most proper and usual, to take away all excuse from transgressors, who might plead ignorance: and one does not see that Adam and Eve, who studied however to palliate their crime, exclaimed against the meaning of the law, as they might have done, if that had been the sense of it which I am now refuting, which they never could

could have conjectured to be the meaning of it, unless they had perused the commentators.

In fine, they do violence to the text of sacred scripture. God says : " The day that thou eatest of this fruit, *thou shalt die.*" The gloss says : The day that thou eatest of it, thou shalt *not* die ; but from that very day, from immortal which thou wast before, thou shalt become mortal. God menaces Adam and Eve with a death, which was to seize them directly : " The day that you eat of this fruit, you shall be punished with death : " instead of which the comment speaks of a death which was not to attack them till nine or ten centuries after ! God only threatens them with a simple death ; but the exposition, besides temporal death, menaces them with death eternal, with torments that will never, never, have an end. M. Martin, in his note upon this passage, ingenuously acknowledges that this expression, *thou shalt die*, never signifies, in the ordinary use, and literally taken, any thing but *temporal* death. But immediately his theological ideas coming across him, he adds, without proof, " we must, nevertheless, understand here eternal damnation." That is, M. Martin supports here two characters, first he speaks as an interpreter, and then he concludes as a divine.

If then one can understand neither eternal damnation, since the threatening does not mention it, nor even natural death, which they did
not

incur till several centuries had flowed, and, which is only a consequence of the laws of nature, since we see little children die, who are exempt from sin; why should we not keep to the proper and literal sense, or, rather, to the *only* sense of the threatening: "the same day that thou eatest of it, thou shalt die." I own it does not furnish materials for long speculations; that there is nothing of the wonderful in it, nor which gratifies the curiosity of the learned; but it has this advantage, to be conformable to the language of the scripture, and to the nature of laws, as well human as divine.

In effect, when God commanded Abimelech to restore Sarah to Abraham: "If thou do not restore her, said he to him, know that thou shalt die." Did he understand any thing else by this, but a violent and premature death? Another Abimelech issued this law in favour of Isaac and Rebecca: "Whosoever shall touch this man or his wife, shall die." Is this declaring to the reader, that the inhabitants of Geran were not mortal before this prohibition? Did Saul think of natural death, when he published that edict: "He who shall have committed this sin, were he my son Jonathan, shall die?" What did also king Solomon intend, when he forbade Shimei to go out of Jerusalem: "The day that thou shalt go out, know that thou shalt die?" In fine, it is very usual with Moses to conclude his laws with this threatening: Whosoever shall do such or such a thing,

a thing, let him die, or, let them cause him to die. And what is remarkable, is, that in all these places, where I find this expression, it denotes a sudden and violent death. The following is a very singular one, and perfectly characterizes it. The king of Syria having fallen sick, sent to the prophet Elisha, saying, *Shall I live from this malady?*—or, to speak, not in the Hebrew, but in the modern mode of expression, Shall I recover of this disease. The prophet has answered the messenger: “Go, say unto him, Thou wilt certainly recover from it: howbeit, the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die.” Elisha then meant to say, that the malady was not mortal; that the king would not die of it; but that however he would die a violent death: and in reality he was smothered in his bed by Hazael his successor. It is then manifest, from the usage of the Hebrew language, that this threatening, “the day that thou eatest of this fruit, thou shalt die,” ought to be understood, of a precipitate and violent death.

But you will say, Adam and Eve did not die immediately: it is true, God commuted, or changed the punishment; and it is the scripture itself which leads us to this sentiment. Adam and Eve had no sooner violated the law, than God made them appear before him, and after having heard them, at first he cursed the serpent, as the author of all this mischief; then he addressed himself to the wretched couple, which
had

had suffered themselves to be seduced ; and observe, the sentence does not import, you shall die that death with which you have been threatened, but the Judge condemns the woman to bring forth with sorrow, and the man to toil in the ground. How ought we then to judge of the event? not by the threatening, which might be changed according to circumstances, but by the sentence which often qualifies the threatening: it follows, that the punishment of death was changed into severe labour. Besides, man was one day to die, and there was not a necessity that God should consign him to death immediately ; “ inasmuch as thou art but dust, said God to him, and thou shalt one day return into dust.” For if it was true, that a man had been menaced with a quite different death to a violent one, and that the menace had afterwards been rigorously executed, it would follow, that the sentence would have added new punishments to the threatening, which is neither agreeable to the justice nor goodness of the supreme Being. It is true, that one sometimes aggravates the punishment according to the circumstances of the crime ; but in the present case, every thing is favourable : there is neither inveterate malignity, nor habitual wickedness, nor even a single relapse : it is a simple fault of two persons without experience, seduced by the serpent, who spread snares for their simplicity ; a fault preceded by perfect innocence, and followed

lowed by a sincere repentance : all these circumstances ought to induce the Judge to lessen the punishment rather than to aggravate it. Since then the sentence makes no mention of the punishment of death, expressed in the threatening, and, on the contrary, the threatening had not spoken of this other punishment declared by the sentence, all the rules of equity oblige us to believe, that the sentence, far from being raised and aggravated above the menace, only substitutes to the punishment of death, a punishment much more lenient and gentle.

The execution of the sentence leads us also to this sentiment. God, who saw that Adam and Eve had led a life too happy in this terrestrial paradise, drove them out from it, pronouncing these remarkable words : " The man is become like one of us, to know good and evil ; " or rather, on account of the ambiguity of the particle *mimennou*, which Moses employs five or six times in this chapter and the preceding, always in reference to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ; " the man is become like one of us, who know good and evil, " that is, like an angel, for *this* is their usual epithet : " Now let us take heed, continues the Almighty, that man put not forth his hand to the tree of life, and eat of it, and live *too long*." Thus ought the last expression to be translated as it is by Aben Ezra the famous Jewish Rabbi : for the Hebrew word, in the opinion of all the interpreters, signifies

nifies a *long time* as well as *always*; and it is the *nature* of the thing spoken of which ought to determine the sense of it. Wholesome food, pure air, exemption from toil, from care, from all fatiguing labour, can indeed prolong the life of man; but that a fruit had the virtue of rendering him immortal, is a mere Rabbinical vision, repugnant to good sense and to all the most certain principles of philosophy.

To conclude: I propose here these brief reflections only as mere conjectures, to afford a theme for debate, and the investigation of truth. If my sentiments are just, they will disembarass theology from an infinite number of useless questions. God preserve us all from bigotry and religious prejudices!

AN ENQUIRY CONCERNING THE
TRANSLATION OF THE PASSAGE IN GENESIS
WHERE THE MAN IS SAID TO BECOME LIKE ONE OF US
TO KNOW GOOD AND EVIL.

OF THE HEBREW PARTICLE
אֵן (AN) WHICH IS USED IN THIS PASSAGE
SOMETIMES IN A SIGNIFICATION OF A
PARTICLE OF THE FIRST KIND, AND
SOMETIMES IN A SIGNIFICATION OF A
PARTICLE OF THE SECOND KIND.

ENQUIRY,
Whether the Doctrine of the TRINITY
be found in a Passage in GENESIS.

*Behold, the man is become like one of us to know
good and evil.*

IT must ingenuously be confessed, that the
divines of all denominations seem to be as it
were agreed in concert to translate this pas-
sage, in the manner now exhibited. It is how-
ever certain, that if we strictly follow the rules
of the Hebrew language, as well as attend
to all the circumstances of the discourse, that
God intended to express nothing but this; That
man, after having eaten of the fruit of the tree
of knowledge, had by this means acquired the
knowledge of good and evil. Thus not only
we may, but even ought to translate it: Behold
the man is become *as one knowing* good and
evil,

evil; or, which comes to the same, The man is become *by this means as one of those* who know good and evil.

Observe first, that the Hebrew particle *mimennou* is susceptible of different acceptations. Sometimes it signifies of *us*, but oftener of *him*, or, of *it*, according to the subject spoken of. For example, if we confine ourselves to the present chapter, this particle is here found five times, but always in the last sense, and in reference to the tree of knowledge, which constitutes the whole subject of discourse. This is its signification in the third verse: "God hath said to us, you shall not eat *of it*," meaning, of the fruit of this tree: no one ever thought of translating it, you shall not eat *of us*. It also occurs in the fifth verse; "God knoweth that in the day that you eat *of it*, your eyes will be opened." Read also the eleventh and seventeenth verses, which precede this we are explaining, and where the word *mimennou* is always understood in reference to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Nothing consequently prevents us from adopting this sense of it here, and translating this verse: Behold the man is *from it* become as of one those who know good and evil; that is, The man, by having eat of the tree of knowledge, is become intelligent in the knowledge of good and evil.

The following words seem also to lead us to this sense. After God had said, "Behold the man

man is from it become as one knowing good and evil;" he adds, "Now he must be prevented from putting forth his hand, lest he take also of the tree of life, and eat of it, and live for ever." As if God had said, The man by having eat of the tree of knowledge, hath acquired the cognizance of good and evil; care must be taken, that he eat not also of the tree of life, lest he live for ever. One sees in these words a perfect opposition of the tree of knowledge to the tree of life; of the effect which one had caused, to the effect which the other was to produce; of the knowledge which the first had imparted to man, with the life which the second was able to procure him: and there is none but our version which expresseth this antithesis; in referring to the tree of knowledge, the particle *mimennou*, as, in effect, and in the opinion of all the translators, it relates to it in the preceding verses.

I might support my interpretation on the authority of the Chaldee Paraphrase, which is more ancient than the Christian religion; and which the Jews made use of from the time that they had lost the use of the Hebrew tongue, which gradually took place after the Babylonish captivity: Buxtorf, likewise, the most learned man in these subjects, who ever flourished among the Christians, remarks, that this paraphrase, or version, which is made almost word for word after the Hebrew, by the purity of its style, approaches

very near the Chaldee of the prophecies of Daniel. This paraphrase renders the passage as we have done. "Behold the man is become *from it*, for ever, like one of us, who know good and evil." It adds to the text, *for ever*, the better to shew, as I think, the opposition of these words with the following; "He must be hindered from reaching forth his hand, lest he take of the tree of life, eat of it, and live for ever." The tree of knowledge had *for ever* given man the knowledge of good and evil; but the tree of life might make him live *for ever*.

After this, how is it possible that any one person could have believed that he found here the plurality of the divine persons, not only in a manner which he could not doubt of himself, it would have been supportable had these limits been observed, but so as to treat those as blind and concealed deists, who could not discern this doctrine here: a conduct which appears to me very remote from that modesty which constitutes the character of a true Christian. It is not that I approve of the interpretation which the Jews and Arians have given to the text of Moses; they have always appeared to me forced and unnatural: but I cannot blame them that they did not discover in this passage, what in reality was never in it.

What probability is there, say they, that Moses set out with a doctrine so subtle and abstruse,

struse, before he had established distinctly the unity of God. For a plurality of persons in the Godhead once laid down in the beginning of Genesis, and even advanced without the salvoes it so much requires, it was to be feared, that this first impression would lead to polytheism, which this lawgiver intended to oppose. It is true, that in order to feel the force of this objection, one must already be prepossessed against a plurality of persons in the Godhead; or at least in this respect, be in that philosophic uncertainty, so recommended by Descartes to all enquirers after truth. But as for others, they cannot be struck with it: they will ever regard a *plurality* of persons in the divine nature for the *first* article of their faith, and the unity of God for the *second* only. Moses will have done nothing but follow this natural order, which the greatest part of our catechisms in effect follow: and if one might choose, it was better to begin with a plurality of persons, were it at the expence of the doctrine of the unity, than begin with this doctrine to the prejudice of the plurality of persons.

In reality there is this difference between Moses and the catechisms, that the latter rectify immediately what they had just asserted, whereas Moses does not do so here: and if he elsewhere teaches the unity of God, it must be confessed that he takes up the subject very late, and after polytheism had already given its blow. This

idea would not even fail of maintaining itself, by distinguishing unity of number and unity of species; as the fathers of the first council of Nice did, who believed three substances in one sole divinity; just as Peter, James, and John are three men, who share one sole humanity, not in number but in species, as St. Athanasius, or, the author of the Dialogues on the Trinity explains it.

But to speak frankly and ingenuously the true state of the case; we have less at heart one common than one particular interest. The doctrine of the unity of God regards *all* men at least, Jews and Christians; it is for them to maintain it as well as they are able; but as for the doctrine of the Trinity, it is our *own particular* affair, and we ought to defend it on any terms whatever. It was not sufficient that it was contained in the New Testament, it must be also in the Old: for an article so essential as this is, ought to have been believed at all times: nobody can contest this. As soon as they had found it in one place, they did not fail to find it in twenty more: for it is here, why should it not be there? This article must even be as old as the creation, to make God say, "Behold man is become like *one of us*." The discovery is so happy, that one ought not to be surprised that it has had such a run of success. It is in truth one of those things, of which one is always very glad to avail one's self,

self, and which convince because one has a liking for them. Certainly it was difficult to resist such a temptation; and criticism for once ought to make her bow to the analogy of faith. In truth, one need only have eyes to perceive that the particle *mimennou*, which, in the preceding verses, is always used in reference to the tree of knowledge, may, and even ought, to relate to it in the verse in question. But it happens sometimes to the greatest men, to suffer their prepossessions to bias them in such a manner, *that seeing they see not*, to speak in the language of scripture.

Justin Martyr was the first divine who thought of searching for the Trinity in the Old Testament. Newly come from Plato's school, he took the writings of this philosopher for commentaries upon scripture: and though he was not blessed with the acuteest ken, witness the inscription of *Semo Sancus*, which he ingeniously read *Simon Magus*, yet he found every where his Platonic Trinity, with which he was strongly imbued; as those who look through stained glass see all objects of the same colour.

I know very well that the Septuagint exhibits, "Behold the man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil." But in the first ages of Christianity, this version was already so altered and corrupted, whether through negligence or through design, and even since Origen's time, who reformed it anew, it has suffered so

many changes, by pretended corrections, not to say, corruptions, that the ablest men much question whether we now have the true version of the Septuagint.

If one would penetrate farther into the meaning of these words, though that is not necessary to the design which I here proposed, one might remark, that the Hebrew word, which signifies *one*, is frequently superfluous in this language, as it commonly is in the French, in which we should equally say, Adam étoit un habile homme, and Adam étoit habile homme. According to this observation, the text, which exhibits, "Behold the man is become from it as *one* knowing good and evil," presents only a general idea, and plainly means, that Adam, by means of having eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, had acquired the cognizance of good and evil. But if the word *one* here makes part of a number, or of a certain class of beings, into which the first man had just entered, the idea becomes more particular, and then one may thus translate it: "Behold the man is become from it like one of those who know good and evil;" an irony, which seems to allude to the treacherous promise of the serpent; "The day that you eat of it, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as Gods who know good and evil;" that is, according to the common opinion, you shall be like to angels, whom the scripture calls *Gods*, and to whom it attributes the quality of being ignorant

ignorant of nothing, as a characteristic which distinguishes them from the rest of the creatures. Of this kind is the language addressed to David: "My lord is as an angel of God *to discern good and bad*;" or, as it is expressed afterwards, "My lord is wise as an angel of God, knowing every thing that is upon the earth."

See here a good deal of Hebrew literature, and perhaps more than was requisite. It is however necessary to enter into this detail, if one would decide, by one's own understanding, and not by that of other people, I do not say only this question, but almost all the disputes which we have with heretics, and especially with Jews and Arians. Let one trace the greatest part of the controversies which have been agitated, after beating over a great deal of ground, after all this toil, at last we find a little particle at which we stop, or an ambiguous expression, a custom, a metaphor, an expression more or less animated, conformable or contrary to the genius, more or less bold, of the Oriental languages, and which every one exalts or depreciates accordingly as it suits his particular hypothesis. It is nevertheless on this that commonly the decision of the whole difference depends: and these languages are dead, and consequently imperfectly known; they open a vast field for disputation. This is so much the more difficult to be terminated, as each divine has his weight and his ballance, in which
he

he weighs the words and phrases of the scripture. What shall the poor people here do, who neither understand Greek nor Hebrew? And how many literati are there, who are *some of the people* in this respect? How many lawyers, physicians, philosophers, geometricians, and even preachers, who only understand their Bible by the help of translations? Must they refer themselves to the judgment of those who understand these languages? But they do not harmonize with one another in their sentiments. Must they suspend their judgment? This is what I leave to the examination of persons abler than myself.

A. R. E.

REPLY
TO A
PROFESSOR'S LETTER.

ADVERTISEMENT by the FRENCH EDITOR.

PROFESSOR B. in a letter, which we do not choose to publish, had attempted to prove the deity of Christ from a passage in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter ix. verse 5. He maintained, that it ought to be translated as in the common version; "Of whom is, according to the flesh, Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever:"—because, according the style of St. Paul, the expression, *according to the flesh*, is always in opposition to some other thing, as *to God*; because, moreover, the Syriac version hath rendered this passage in the same sense; and lastly, because this sense is agreeable to the design of the apostle, which was to exalt the advantages which God had conferred on the nation of the Jews, and to render their incredulity the more criminal, if they persisted in it. The professor was not ignorant, that in the ancient copies, the reading was simply this: "Of whom is, according to the flesh, Christ, who is blessed
above

above all for ever and ever :”—and that other interpreters render this passage thus ; “ And of whom is, according to the flesh, Christ, who is blessed above all for ever and ever. Amen !” But he rejected these ways of rendering the passage in question, because they do not obviate all the difficulties ; and the reasons on which the first sense is founded, appeared to him the strongest. To these difficulties, and to these reasons, M. Abauzit replies in the following letter. His perspicuity supersedes our saying any more.

A R E P L Y, &c.

S I R,

THE author of the Letter to Philaethes proposes every thing, the strongest that can be advanced, in order to support the sense that is commonly given to a passage in the ninth chapter of the Romans. One must own that his arguments shew that the common sense is not impossible, and that the terms of the original may in some measure admit of it. But his proofs do not seem to me to demonstrate, that the sense, which he follows, is the most natural ; that the interpretation he rejects, cannot take place ; that it is contrary to the terms of the text, and to the tenour of St. Paul's discourse.

course. I am going to indicate the reasons which prevent me from regarding the proofs of the author, as demonstrations of the sense which he hath adopted. They are difficulties contrary to his opinion; doubts, of which I desire you to ask him a solution. His answers will enable you the better to judge of the sense that ought to be given to this passage.

The author of the Letter first of all remarks, that some interpreters would have us follow the ancient copies, where the word *God* is omitted, and in which one only reads; "Of whom is Christ, according to the flesh, who is blessed above all for ever and ever." These interpreters remark, that St. Cyprian, St. Hillary, and St. Chrysostom read it in this manner; and that this lection is very conformable to the style of St. Paul, who call Jesus Christ *Lord*, but who doth not give him the appellation of *God*.

Supposing these ancient fathers read the text in this manner, one may follow *their* readings as well as those of our modern copies. The copies, which these fathers follow, are, without contradiction, more ancient than those after which the editions of the New Testament, that we now have, were made, and consequently ought, in my opinion, to be preferred to them. At least, it is not very certain, that one ought to follow our manner of reading preferably to that which these fathers followed. In this regard, one ought to suspend one's judgment, and

one

one cannot found any doctrine on a passage of this nature.

The author of the Letter objects, first, That if a passage were to become thus equivocal, as soon as it is read differently in different manuscripts, as there is an immense number of various lections, there would no longer be any thing certain in the scriptures. I answer, first, that there is in the scripture a great number of passages, which have no various readings, or whose sense is not, or almost not at all changed by the different lections, insomuch, that those passages are not thereby rendered ambiguous. Secondly, I reply, We wish not a passage to be equivocal, when it has a various lection. There are some readings which manifestly appear to be the blunders of an ignorant copyist; but there are others which effectually render the text ambiguous, as we apprehend. Old manuscripts, for example, present us a certain manner of reading, as it happens in this passage; others exhibit to us a different one: there are no reasons which determine us to follow one of these ways rather than the other. What part are we to take on this occasion? We must suspend our judgment. I confess, we shall not have the pleasure of determining the sense of a passage, which might be useful to us in establishing some doctrine: but this is an inconvenience one cannot avoid: one ought not to deny a thing, which is otherwise certain, under pretence that it is incommo-
dious

dious to us. A Socinian, who shall not have the word *God* in his copy, will equally have a right to say, that we ought not to embarrass ourselves with different readings; that if one regards them, there will be nothing certain in scripture; that we ought not to give ourselves a moment's uneasiness, that we read in our copies the word *God*, and that this appellation seems to be there attributed to Jesus Christ.

It is objected, in the second place, that the word *God* might have been left out of this passage by the negligence of transcribers, or the fraud of heretics.

I answer, first, that a Socinian will be able to retort this argument, and say, that it is through the negligence of copyists, that the word *God* hath been added, or through the pious frauds of the orthodox. Secondly, there is, however, no probability that it hath been inserted by the orthodox, or left out by the heretics. They never reproached one another with any thing of this kind. In the third place, there is greater likelihood, that this word imperceptibly slipped into the text. It might be, for example, that St. Paul having only written, "He who is over all be blessed for ever." Some one, in order to mark the person of whom this was to be understood, had written the word *God* in the margin, and this word insensibly crept into the text.

They

They rejoin, thirdly, that it is false, that St. Paul did not accustom himself to call Jesus Christ, God; so as, on this account, the reading, which does not give the appellation of God, ought to be preferred before that which seems to give it to him. To prove that St. Paul calls Jesus Christ God, they alledge, Titus ii. 13, and 1 Timothy iii. 16. I answer, 1. That it is at least very certain, that St. Paul does not usually give Jesus Christ the appellation of God. He contents himself, at least ordinarily, with styling him Lord, or the Son of God. This being so, we ought not entirely to reject what the above-mentioned interpreters say, who prefer that reading, in which Jesus Christ is not called *God*, to that in which he is—the first being, in reality, more conformable to the usual style of St. Paul. 2. It is not certain, that Jesus Christ is called God in those passages which they alledge. One may translate the passage in Titus ii. 13. in this manner: “Looking for the blessed hope, and the appearance of the glory of our great God, and of the Saviour Jesus Christ.” It is true, that the article *of* is not found in the text, and that it only has, “Of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” But this article is very often understood. Our translators supply it in a number of places, and they make no scruple of supplying it in a passage very similar to this, 2 Thessal. i. 12. As for the passage in 1 Tim. iii. 16. besides

besides that the word *God* is also wanting in several copies, Jesus Christ is not there called God. St. Paul there only tells us, that under the gospel God hath been manifested in the flesh; meaning, that the divinity is here manifested by a sensible manner in a man, or by means of a man, namely, by Jesus Christ.

But let us not insist any more on this, that the word *God* is omitted in some manuscripts. Let us suppose that our manner of reading the text is best; which I should with tolerable facility believe, though the reasons advanced in the Letter do not prove it in a convincing manner: let us see what is then the sense of this passage.

They explain it two ways. 1. Some think that it ought to be thus translated: "Of whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed for ever, Amen!" The author of this letter is of this sentiment, and regards this passage as one of those which prove the Deity of Jesus Christ. 2. Other expositors put a full stop after these words, "Of whom is Christ, according to the flesh." And render the following words thus: "God, who is over all, be blessed for ever, Amen!" This version is very conformable to the words of the original, and agrees very well with the arrangement of the apostle's discourse. St. Paul had just made a long enumeration of the advantages which God had indulged to the Jewish nation: he had ob-

served, among other particulars, the felicity which this people had enjoyed of having the Messiah born among them : "Of whom is Christ, according to the flesh," he had said : after which, penetrated with gratitude for the signal benefits God had conferred on his country, he pays him the grateful tribute of the profoundest acknowledgements : "God, says he, who is over all, be blessed for ever, Amen !" God, who is the author of all these blessings, which the Jewish people have received, who, through his exuberant goodness, hath showered them all upon this distinguished people, may he be blessed for them for ever and ever. It is not unusual with St. Paul to break off his discourse abruptly in this manner, to pay to the Deity praises and thanksgivings. Thus, in the eleventh chapter and thirty-sixth verse of this epistle, he suddenly breaks off his discourse, addressing himself to God with this doxology, "To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen !" And in 1 Timothy 1. 17. after having said, that Jesus Christ was come to save sinners, of whom he was the first instance, he directeth himself to God in this manner ; "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God only wise, be honour and glory, for ever and ever, Amen !"

Against this explication, the author of the letter objects : 1. That the article δ , which is in the text, when it is found before the participle $\omega\upsilon$ of the verb $\epsilon\iota\mu\iota$, which signifies *to be*,
ought

ought to be referred to the noun which precedes; as appears from 2. Corinth. xi. 31. and thus it ought here to be referred to Jesus Christ in this manner, "Of whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed for ever."

I answer, that, in truth, in the passages which he hath quoted; the article *ὁ* connects the participle *ὢν* of the verb *εἰμι*, which signifies *to be*, with the antecedent noun; but most commonly this article is related to the noun that follows it. It answers to our article *the*, which is governed on the noun that follows, not on that which precedes it. Thus we follow the most usual signification of this article, when we govern it on the noun *God* which follows it, translating in this manner, "The God, or, God who is over all, be blessed for ever, Amen!" Instead of this, the author of the Letter gives it an irregular signification, in referring it to the word *Christ*, which goes before; "Of whom is Christ, who is God over all." The Greeks, in order to express the sense which our author would give this passage, ordinarily make use of the pronoun relative *ὃς*, and not the article *ὁ*. Thus, if the explication of the author is not absolutely contrary to the original, it is certain, at least, that ours is much more agreeable to it, since we here give that meaning to the terms which most naturally they admit.

A second objection is, that St. Paul says that Jesus Christ descended from the Jews, *according to the flesh*; that this implies, that Jesus Christ only descended from them in regard to one part of his nature; and that it is very probable, that St. Paul, after having remarked that Christ descended from the Jews in one certain respect, was willing to denote that, with regard to another part of his character, he was God, blessed for ever: that in this manner the word *God* must be referred to Jesus Christ, in order that there may be an antithesis, which St. Paul never fails to make, every time he employs this expression, *according to the flesh*.

I answer, that in truth this expression denotes that Jesus Christ does not descend from the Jews but in one certain respect: in effect, Christ did not descend from the Jews but *according to the flesh*, that is, in regard to his deriving his birth from the Virgin Mary; and *he was the son of God according to the spirit of holiness*, as St. Paul remarks in his Epistle to the Romans, i. 3, 4. or *according to the Holy Spirit*, that is, in regard to his miraculous conception, of which the Holy Spirit was the author. See Luke i. 35. But it was not necessary that St. Paul should here mark this opposition: it was sufficient, in order to extol the advantages of the Jews, that St. Paul observed, among other things, that the Messiah deduced his birth from them, respecting that part of his character

character by which he descended from man, without denoting his descent from God in another regard. It is not certain that every time the sacred writers speak of the flesh, they immediately after speak of the spirit, by way of antithesis. St. Paul, in this chapter, verse third, speaks of the Israelites, whom he calls his brethren *according to the flesh*, without speaking of those who are his brethren according to the spirit: and 1 Cor. x. 18. he also speaks of *Israelites according to the flesh*, without mentioning Israelites according to the spirit: but what is more explicit on this subject, St. Peter says, Acts ii. 30. that God had promised David to make the Messiah descend from him *according to the flesh*, without indicating afterwards that in another respect he was to derive his birth from the Deity.

They might raise a third difficulty against the translation which we adopt; "God, who is over all, be blessed for ever:" they might say that the word *be* is not in the text, and that we have done wrong to supply it.

But this word is commonly understood in the forms of benediction: thus Ephes. i. 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" the word *be* is not found in the text: so also 1 Peter i. 3. "Blessed be God, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope;" the word *be* is not in the text; one supplies it without any difficulty.

4. In order to support the sense which he gives to this passage of scripture, the author objects, that the Syriac Version refers, as he does, the word *God* to Jesus Christ, in this manner: "Of whom was Christ born according to the flesh, who is God, above all things, blessed eternally, Amen."

But the authority of the Syriac Version is not of any great weight in this regard: it was made only about the fifth or sixth century, at a time that they were ransacking every quarter for weapons to combat the Arians. The orthodox themselves do not fail to exaggerate the inexactness of this version, whenever one objects to them, that the famous passage in St. John, respecting the Trinity, is not found in it.

5. They object that, according to the common translation, which they defend, St. Paul very happily advances to the intended conclusion of his argument, making the Jews perceive that the Messiah, who had been born among them, was not a mere man, but God himself, which was a most glorious national advantage for this people.

But the apostles do not always detail every thing that might serve their design: it was sufficient in this place that St. Paul, in order to display the advantages of the Jews, should say, that the Messiah derived his birth from them in a certain regard, without its being necessary for him to expatiate on the nature of the Messiah. The
Jews

Jews knew well enough the value of this advantage.

6. Finally they object that, by following the common version, St. Paul makes the Jews very clearly see how criminal they were in rejecting the Messiah, who was God, blessed for ever.

But it was not necessary that St. Paul, in this verse, should furnish a topic, from which, to convince them of the guilt they incurred in rejecting Jesus Christ. This he does in other passages, and it is totally foreign to his present argument in this place.

The professor concludes his letter in refuting a proof drawn from the word *Amen*, which was alledged to him in order to shew that these words contain a doxology, and he makes it appear that it is not convincing. This we acknowledge: but this proof is not necessary to us. It suffices that we have a right to espouse the sense which we have pointed out, to know that it is very agreeable to the terms of the text, and to the strain of St. Paul's discourse, as we have proved.

When the Arians object, that Jesus Christ, in various passages, is represented as inferior to his father, the Trinitarians reply, that these passages ought to be understood of Christ as man: but that though Christ be inferior to his Father as man, yet at the same time he has in him a divine nature, by which he is God, blessed for ever, with the Father. If they urge, for exam-

ple, this passage of St. John xiv. 28. where Christ says, "The Father is greater than I;" and that of St. Matthew, xxiv. 36. where it is said, that "the son does not know the day of judgment," they reply, that it is as man that Jesus Christ says, that the Father is greater than him; that it is as man that he does not know the day of judgment; but that as God, he is equal to his Father, he knows all things, he searches the hearts and reins. These answers do not appear satisfactory to the Arians: they frame various difficulties against them, which merit examination, and which we are going to exhibit to the reader.

1. They say, that in order to apply this answer to the passages which represent Jesus Christ as inferior to his Father, it ought to appear very clearly from scripture, that there are two natures in Christ, one divine, and the other human. But this is what does not appear from the sacred writings. There is not a single passage which obliges us to regard Jesus Christ as the supreme God. There is nothing, therefore, which authorizes us to make this distinction.

2. One cannot apply this distinction to the passages of scripture in question, without doing violence to them, without attributing to them a mode of speaking, unknown to all languages, contrary to all the rules of language. In effect, by these rules, one may indeed attribute to an whole, what agrees to some one of its parts; but

but one cannot deny of a whole, what agrees to one of the parts which compose it. For example, I can say of a man, that he thinks that he is extended, because there is in him something that thinks and that is extended; but I cannot say of a man, he does not think, he is not extended, under pretence that there is in him something that does not think, and something that is not extended. Thus, supposing that Jesus Christ be the supreme God, he cannot say, that he knows not the day of judgment, as on this supposition he knows it in an infallible manner by his divinity. He cannot say in a general manner, and without any limitation, that this day is unknown to him, without violating truth. The language which they have made Jesus Christ employ, in supposing that he had present to his mind this imaginary distinction, resembles that which I might hold, when interrogated by a judge concerning facts which are very well known to me, I should reply, that they were unknown to me, under pretence that my body had no knowledge of them. It is as if one asked me if I had seen such a person, I should answer, no; because when I saw him I had one of my eyes shut, and did not see him with that eye. It is as if when one should desire me to write upon some subject, I should reply, that I was not able to write, because my mind could not hold a pen. There is nobody who does not see how absurd such a mode of speaking

speaking would be. There is no absurdity a man might not advance, if he were allowed to employ similar reservation. A man might say that he neither eats nor drinks, because his mind properly does not eat or drink. He might say, that he does not think, that he has not an idea of any one thing, that he remembers nothing, that he cannot reason, because all these operations do not belong to his body. One might say, in speaking of Jesus Christ, that he was not born; that he did not suffer; that he was not crucified; that he did not die; that he was not raised again, or ascended into heaven, because all this is not true of him with regard to his divinity. One easily sees that this would be to institute an egregious abuse of language: one ought therefore to be cautious of attributing it to Jesus Christ, in supposing that he adopted this mode of expressing himself, in pretending that he declared to the world his ignorance of the day of judgment, because he knew it not as man, though at the very time, as God, this day was perfectly known to him.

3. This distinction, which they have framed, is incompatible with the ideas which the orthodox espouse of the divinity of Jesus Christ. If they acknowledged two persons in Jesus Christ, it might perhaps take place: they might say, that these two persons, in Jesus Christ take their turns in speaking, and that it is the human person that speaks, when, for example, Jesus Christ

Christ says that he knew not the day of judgment. But the orthodox do not acknowledge one sole person in Christ: that which constitutes his person according to them, is his divine nature: the human nature of Christ is with regard to his person only, what *cloaths* are in respect to a *man* who is invested with them. It is therefore always the divinity which speaks in Jesus Christ; for it is this nature, which constitutes his person, which ought to speak: it is therefore the divinity, according to their system, which was to speak, when they asked Jesus Christ when the day of judgment would happen. Agreeably to their system, therefore, they cannot say, that it is as man that Jesus Christ speaks on this occasion.

4. If one examine the passages to which the orthodox apply this distinction, one will find, that it cannot take place. In effect, Jesus Christ is most frequently represented here as the Son of God, that is, according to the system of the orthodox, as God. One cannot therefore say, that it is as man that Jesus Christ speaks on these occasions: for example, in the passage we have already quoted, Jesus Christ says, "As for that day, and that hour, no man knoweth it, not the angels who are in heaven, nor even the Son, but the Father." *No man knows it*, neither the angels, nor even the Son, that is, not Christ himself, considered as exalted above the angels, considered as the Son of God, as
 God,

God, according to system: one cannot therefore say, that it was as man that Jesus Christ speaks in this passage: he excludes even this, when he says no *man*. In effect, when the disciples addressed this question to Jesus Christ; "Tell us when these things shall come pass:" they did not merely ask him what he might know of them by lights natural to humanity; they addressed themselves to him as the Son of God; they wished to enjoy a share of that knowledge which Jesus might possess in this regard, in consequence of his intimate union with the Deity. It follows, therefore, that Jesus Christ must be absolutely ignorant of the time of the last judgment to answer as he did, that there are not in Jesus Christ those two natures which serve for the basis of that distinction they have systematically framed, and that this distinction must be vain and chimerical.

5. Though the mode of speaking, which they attribute to the scriptures, were not as contrary as it really is to the uniform rules of language, one ought at least to own that it is far from being natural, far from being customary; that the expressions which the scripture employs, would naturally and obviously enough denote, that Jesus Christ does not know all things, that Jesus Christ is not equal to his Father. Now if Jesus Christ was God, is it conceivable that the scriptures would have chosen to make use of expressions so equivocal; expressions, which

would have a tendency to overthrow a doctrine of this importance, which would put men in imminent danger of being deceived? What would the orthodox say of a man who in his discourse would very frequently declare, that Jesus Christ is not eternal; that Jesus Christ is not omnipotent; that Jesus Christ does not know all things; that Jesus Christ did not create the Heavens and the Earth? It would be in vain for him sometimes to ascribe to Jesus Christ attributes of divinity, he would not fail to pass for a heretic: they would pretend, that if he were thoroughly convinced that Jesus Christ was God, he would talk in a different strain. Why do they not make the same judgment in regard to the scripture? If Jesus Christ was God, would it speak so frequently of him as a man inferior to his Father; as a man who holds every thing at his hands? The scripture, in using the language of the Unitarians, does it not authorize their principles? Why blame so heinously in individuals expressions which occasion no trouble when one finds them in the scripture? Why study to elude, by an unnatural distinction, the clear and natural sense which exhibits itself in these passages. They ought at least to grant, that from the reflections which they make to justify these expressions of scripture, which represent Jesus Christ to us as inferior to his Father, they ought, I say, to grant, that the Unitarians are authorized in speaking as they do

do of Jesus Christ: they will be able to say that Jesus Christ is not omnipotent; that Jesus Christ does not know every thing; that Jesus Christ did not create the Heaven and Earth. They will follow herein a mode of speaking approved by the orthodox; they will adopt the style of scripture; no one will have any reason to be offended with this language. One must perhaps say on this subject, something like what a famous orthodox man said with regard to the subjects of *Grace*; *One must preach like an Arminian, and believe like a Calvinist*: so here, one must speak with the Socinians, and believe with the orthodox. Who does not see, however, whither sentiments of this kind lead!

To conclude, what shews the little foundation that this distinction hath, which they employ in order to accommodate those passages which represent Jesus Christ as inferior to his Father, is, that the ancient Fathers, even the most orthodox of them, never made use of it. They took a different way to answer these passages: they owned that Jesus Christ, considered even as God, was in some respects subordinate to his Father: that as it was from him that he derived his being, in this regard he depended in some measure on his Father; in this respect he might say, *My Father is greater than me*. Several also of the most zealous divines for the Trinity employ this expedient, to answer the difficulties which are proposed to them, and do

not

not apply to all sorts of passages the distinction
I have been examining. I am, Sir,

With the profoundest esteem,

Your most obedient servant,

M. ABAUZIT.

A

PARAPHRASE

ON

Some Verses in the first Chapter of St. JOHN.

*In the beginning was the word, and the word was
with with God, and the word was God. 2.*

The same was in the beginning with God. 3.

*All things were made by him, and without him
was not any thing made that was made. 4. In*

him was life, and the life was the light of men.

*5. The light shineth in darkness, and the dark-
ness comprehended it not, &c. 14. And the*

*word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us full
of grace and truth; and we beheld his glory,
the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.*

THE Greek word, which our translation
hath rendered by that of *word*, signifies
also *reason, intelligence, wisdom*. This sense is
much

much better than the other ; it is more accommodated to the Divine nature, which is purely spiritual, and to which *word* is not congruous. If God is often represented as speaking, it is nothing else but his wisdom which conceives any design, and the sacred writers borrow this metaphor from men, who manifest their intentions by speech. This being laid down, the design of St. John, in my opinion, is to inform us, that the same wisdom, which formed the creatures with so much skill, hath not shone with less splendor in the creation of the new world. This sentiment is very exalted ; it gives a grand idea of the gospel, and in order to place it in the strongest point of light, let us closely follow the terms of the Evangelist.

In the beginning was the word: that is, there is an eternal intelligence, a sovereign wisdom, which preceded all ages. *And the word was with God, or in God*: this signifies that wisdom hath always been inseparable from the Deity, that it resides in him as in its true and only source: this is exactly parallel to that beautiful figure in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, where wisdom is introduced thus speaking: *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways*; that is, I am his most precious ornament; I accompany him in all his steps. And to prevent any one from falling into the opinion of the Pagans, who framed of this virtue, ~~or~~ Minerva, a divine person

person different from their great God, St. John explains himself with greater precision; he adds, that wisdom is not distinct from God himself: *The word was God.*

After having marked the nature of this wisdom, he considers it in its effects; and in order to come to this more naturally, he resumes his discourse: *In the beginning then was wisdom with God, and all things were made by it.* The turn is expressive and energetic, and leaves a great deal to be understood: God consults wisdom, and the creatures afterwards issue out of chaos. This truth, though very important, was unknown to the philosophers; even the most enlightened of them: the greatest part believed that the world was destitute of a cause, that every thing was made without reason and fortuitously. The apostle at once precludes an error so capital; he declares, *that all things were made by reason.* In effect, if there ever was a plan well conceived, if there ever was a work in which skill and intelligence were to be exerted, without contradiction it is the universe. Here one beholds all the characters of a consummate wisdom every where shine. To attribute so much order to chance, effects so uniform to nothing but caprice, is to associate the most incompatible ideas, and to renounce one's reason. Stones, which are detached from the summit of a rock, would form below a regular and beau-

teous edifice, before parts of matter, blind and incapable of any design, had produced, I will not say the universe, but only a creature similar to the human species. In vain will you put them in motion; if you call not in the interposition of Wisdom, the whole will be a confused miscellany; *Without it nothing of that which hath been made, would have been made.*

From this, St. John passes to the advantages which this Wisdom was to procure to the world: *In It was life, and the life was the light of men.* Not merely is it the source of life and of true happiness, it is moreover a lamp to conduct us thither; and one can make no advances in the road to it, but in proportion as one follows the light of this reason. But men have wretchedly wandered but too far from it. The *World*, says St. Paul, *through wisdom, did not know God.* How sufficient soever it was to dissipate the ignorance of mankind, especially at the time of the gospel, when this light was in its meridian, they chose rather to surrender themselves up to their prejudices, than hearken to pure and enlightened reason. *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.*

In fine, behold the last period of the Word: St. John now arrives at his principal proposition, and at what was to be the subject of his history, *The word was made flesh.* Before we give the true sense of this expression, let us first remove a false idea.

idea. Properly speaking, Wisdom did not become Flesh; the Deity was not metamorphosed into man: this revolts all the principles of good sense. What then does the expression signify, *Wisdom was made flesh*? One cannot have a better interpreter than St. Paul; God, says he, *manifested himself in flesh*. This passage is exactly parallel to this of St. John, who intended to express no other thing, except, that Wisdom was most fully manifested, that it became sensible in the person of Jesus Christ, and this Wisdom appeared in his doctrine, in his discourses, in the whole of his conduct. It is for this reason he is called *the image of the invisible God*: the world saw the perfections of the Divinity shine forth in him; and if this Wisdom made itself known by the works of creation, one may say that it hath openly manifested itself under the gospel. *It dwelt amongst us, full of grace and truth*, that is, It never ceased to shower down blessings upon men, in irradiating them with its sacred light, and supplying them with every thing necessary to salvation: *and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father*. This glory appeared by the miracles of Jesus Christ, by his resurrection, by his ascension into heaven—a glory which transcended that of Moses and the prophets; but a glory which was congruous to the quality of the only begotten Son of God, formed in a miraculous manner

manner by his Father, and deputed from him to men with an extraordinary power.

I shall annex a short paraphrase, that the ideas of St. John may at once be clearly seen.

1. There is an eternal Reason, a sovereign Wisdom, which hath existed from all ages: this Wisdom hath ever been inseparable from God, or to speak properly, it is God himself.

2. In the beginning of the world, It was then with God, who never does any thing without consulting it.

3. And he employed it in the Creation of the universe. In effect, there is no creature, in which one doth not see some trace of this Wisdom shine, so that without It things would never have attained that point of beauty which we admire.

4. Wisdom is the source of life and of true happiness, and not merely this; It serves moreover as a light to conduct us to them.

5. This light especially hath shone forth in our days; but how capable soever it were of dispelling the shades of ignorance, blind mortals chose rather to wander in error, than follow the counsels of pure and unclouded reason.

14. And if the Divine Wisdom hath appeared in the works of the Creation, one may say that it hath no less displayed its splendor under the Gospel. It hath rendered itself sensible and palpable in Jesus Christ; by his means It hath never ceased to do good to men: we have been witnesses of the miracles which were effected by this Wisdom, and of the

glory with which Jesus Christ was invested, a glory much greater than what appeared in Moses and the prophets, such as was proper to be the glory of the only begotten Son of God.

AN EXPLICATION

OF THE
Fourth and fifth Verses of the seventeenth
Chapter of St. JOHN.

I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do: And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

THESE words are taken from that prayer which Jesus Christ addressed to God a little before his death. He represents to his Father the labours he had employed to advance his glory, and requests of him a recompense for them: *I have glorified thee, says he, upon earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do*; that is, I have laboured to advance thy glory among men; I have punctually executed all the orders which thou hast given me in this

respect. Jesus Christ had had no other object during his whole life but advancing the glory of his Father. He had advanced it by making him known to men as the only true God; in making them acquainted with his perfections; in instructing them in his will; in giving the cogent motives to engage them to submit to it, in proposing to them, in his own person, a perfect model of all kinds of virtue: and he was now upon the point of laying down his life to confirm these salutary truths which he had taught them, and to ratify by the most cruel tortures, that excellent model which he had given them during his life. Having thus laboured to advance the glory of his Father, it was equitable that God should reciprocally glorify him, and it is what he requests in these words: *I have glorified thee, says he, upon earth; glorify me, O Father, with thyself, or, near thy person; that is, in elevating me near to thyself in heaven, in making me sit on thy throne: Glorify me with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was.*

One cannot understand by this glory, of which Jesus Christ here speaks, a glory which he in reality had as God from all eternity: For 1. The glory which the Orthodox suppose that Jesus Christ had as God from all eternity, is a glory which cannot be lost, a glory which is not subjected to change: but the point here is a glory which Jesus Christ had not when he preferred

ferred this prayer. 2. If the subject in question was a glory which regarded Jesus Christ as God, he would have had no occasion to request it of his Father: as God he was sufficiently powerful to procure to himself all the glory which was suitable to his Divinity. 3. It is clear, that Jesus Christ here requests a recompense of his ministry; he solicits a glory which he had not essentially and inherently, but what he was then to receive as a compensation for his labours.

What must we then understand by this glory which Jesus Christ says that he had with his Father, before the world was created? It must mean that which his Father had destined for him from all eternity: as if Christ had said, Since I have executed all the commands which thou hast given me, since I have unremittingly laboured to advance thy glory, grant me that glory which from all ages thou hast purposed for me, to be the reward of my labours, that glory which I had, so to speak, in thy mind from all eternity.

This mode of speaking is not unusual in scripture. St. Paul says, that God hath called us to the gospel, according to the grace *which was given to us* in Christ Jesus, before the world was; that is, according to the grace which God *had purposed from* all ages to bestow upon us by Jesus Christ: and in the Epistle to Titus, he says that he taught men to hope for that eter-

nal life, which God, who cannot lie, *promised* before the world was: that is, which he had clearly *decreed to promise*, but which however he did nothing but promise at that time, as he intimates in the following verse.



EXPLANATION

OF THE

Thirteenth Verse of the third Chapter of
St. JOHN.

And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven.

OUR Lord had just said in the passage immediately preceding, "I have told you earthly things, and you believe them not; how should you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

By these words, on the one hand, he reproaches Nicodemus and the Jews with their incredulity concerning what he had just told them of the necessity of totally changing their sentiments and conduct, in order to become subjects of the kingdom of the Messiah: and

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on the other hand, he intimates that he had more exalted things, even celestial, to announce to them. In order to shew them then from whom they were to expect the revelation of these truths, he adds these words, *And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven.*

Before I proceed to investigate the sense of the expressions which are used in this passage, I observe that they will admit the following translation: *And no man hath ascended to heaven, except the Son of man who was in heaven, and who is descended from heaven.*

If in this translation one reads the Son of man *who was* in heaven, and not the Son of man *who is* in heaven, as in our Version, I assert, that this is conformable to the genius of the original, in which the participle *ων* signifies equally, *who is* and *who was*. If it be replied, that, though this be the genius of the Greek language, it is not, however, according to the usage of the evangelists and apostles; I will allege but one single example, to shew that they are mistaken who make this distinction. In the first chapter of this gospel, and in verse 48, Jesus says to Nathaniel, *Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.* In the original it is *ων*, which is justly rendered *wast*.

There are three expressions in this passage whose true meaning it is our present business to discover;

discover; the first, what having ascended to heaven imports, and how Jesus Christ could say this of himself, at the time he spoke it; for this is what is supposed in these words, *No man hath ascended to heaven except the Son of man.* The second, in what sense one must understand what he declares, *That he came down from heaven.* And finally what he intends to mark by that expression, *That he was in heaven.*

With regard to the first of these expressions, one cannot understand it of a real ascension. Jesus Christ had not yet been elevated to heaven when he held this conversation: neither too can it be understood of the ascension of any Divine nature, which it is imagined he had, because one can form no conception that this Divine person, being once descended to unite itself to human nature, ever re-ascended thither, except it was at the time of Christ's visible ascension, which had not happened at the time he was speaking. Not being able then to understand this expression of a real ascension, it hath been necessary to have recourse to a figurative sense, which on the one hand might be suitable to the design which our Lord had in these words, and which we have pointed out; and which, on the other, might deviate as little as possible from his expressions. That which appears the properest, is to understand by *having ascended into heaven*, the having received a perfect cognizance of those celestial truths, which God would reveal

to men. Since, it seems, according to the manner in which men judge, that one must mount to heaven, and there hold communication with the Deity who resides there; hence it might have happened, by a figure not unnatural, that the expression of having ascended into heaven was synonymous, with being instructed in the designs of God. Moreover, this sense corresponds so well to the design which Jesus Christ had, to evince that it was solely from him that one could derive the knowledge of celestial truths, that one cannot doubt that it is the only true one: the greater part also of the interpreters of scripture make no scruple of adopting it.

The second expression, *Came down from heaven*.

When in the same period there are found two terms which have as great relation with one another as there is between *ascending* and *descending*, it is natural, if one is explained in a figurative sense, to understand the other in the same manner. According to this rule of explication, if by *having ascended to heaven* is understood having knowledge of celestial truths, it is agreeable to the order of the discourse that by *being come down from heaven*, is understood the being deputed to deliver these truths to men, without supposing any real descent, in the same manner as one had not understood ascending into heaven of a real ascension: but if the order of

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the sentence require the phrase, *came down from heaven*, to be explained in this manner; the design and connection of our Lord's discourse no less demand it. Jesus Christ intended to evince, as we have already observed, that there is none but himself from whom one can learn heavenly truths: in order to shew this, he says, first, that no one had a perfect cognizance of these truths but himself, the Son of man: he says in the second place, according to our explication, that he was dispatched to announce them to men; whence it follows, that there is none but he from whom we can learn them. What we have just remarked might already suffice to justify the sense which we give to this term; but we are willing further to produce an instance to confirm it. In the sixth chapter of St. John Jesus Christ styles himself the bread which came down from heaven; and in order that their might be no difficulty what was to be understood by this bread, he subjoins, that this bread is his flesh, that is, his person, without comprehending any Divinity: but how can one say, of the person of Jesus Christ, that it descended from heaven, except in a figurative sense, namely, that it was sent of God to men? To pretend, that by the flesh of Jesus Christ, and by the Son of man, one must understand the person of Jesus Christ, comprehending in it his Divinity, requires two things; first, the certain proof of this pre existing Divinity; secondly, the being well

well assured that what is spoken of his flesh or human nature, ought at the same time to be understood of his Divinity, which is repugnant to the common use of language: for though a man may properly say of himself that he is immortal, yet he cannot say of his body that it is immortal; neither can he say of his soul that it is mortal, because his body is subject to death.

In order to support this explication, nothing farther remains for me but to answer two difficulties which may be objected to me.

It is said, that though one explain the phrase of *having ascended up to heaven* in a metaphorical manner, yet it doth not follow that we ought to understand, *having come down from heaven*, in the same figurative acceptation; because for the explanation of the first expression one is obliged to have recourse to metaphor, whilst for the second one is not obliged to do it; that this may very well be understood literally of the second Divine person who came down from heaven, who unites himself to human nature; that it is one of the first great rules of interpretation not to recur to a metaphorical but when the literal sense cannot be admitted. To this objection I answer, that the primary canon of explication, which I have established, being not less certain than the second, I can very well follow it; and rather, as in order to admit the literal sense, which they would have us adopt here, one must suppose a Divine person in Jesus Christ,

Christ, which one ought not to do in the critical examination of this passage which one is canvassing, with a view to infer whether or no there be such a Divine person; otherwise it would be to suppose the point in question.

The other difficulty which they might form is, that if Jesus Christ is not said to have *come down from heaven*, but merely because he was sent of God to men, to reveal to them his will, the scripture must also have said concerning the prophets, that they came down from heaven, since God also deputed them to men to teach them his will, with which phraseology, however, we never meet. I answer, that if Jesus Christ says that he came down from heaven, it is only in two places, the present passage, and the sixth of John, and this solely on occasion of certain figurative expressions which he employed, and which might evince that this here ought to be understood in the same manner. The baptism of John is said, *to be from heaven*.

There remains the third expression, how Jesus Christ could say that he was in heaven before his ascension? I will not scruple to declare, that if his Divinity was before demonstrated, it would be natural to think, that it was in regard to this that he already was in heaven; but as this is the point we are at present *debating*, we ought not to suppose it without *proof*. As it was necessary to adopt a figurative

gurative sense to understand the two first expressions, I do not see that one ought to make a difficulty of admitting it in this third, which has so strict a connection with the two preceding.

One cannot doubt, that before Jesus Christ descended from heaven, that is, as we have explained it, before he was sent of God to men, the Deity had formed, many ages before, the design of commissioning him to this world. One might then believe that Jesus Christ was in heaven, because he was in God, who is in heaven, by the design which he had formed long ago to send him. One might look upon this explication as too subtle and far-fetched, if one did not find three or four examples of it in the style itself of St. John: not only learned and intelligent persons, whom one cannot suspect of prejudice on this subject, have clearly shewn the sentiment which Jesus Christ intended to convey when he said, *before Abraham was, I am*: but the whole preceding context manifests that this expression must be understood of the design which God had planned of sending Jesus Christ, and not of any real pre-existence: they maintain that these words signify, that before Abraham was, I existed, by the design of God respecting me.

The same persons also agree, that when Jesus Christ says, *Glorify thou me, O Father, with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before*

fore the world was ; this ought to be understood of the glory which Jesus Christ had, not actually, but only in the design which he had formed of giving it to him.

One may attribute to a like manner of speaking, what St. John says in the Revelation concerning Jesus Christ, that he is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world ; which one can understand no otherwise, except that he is the lamb, whom one may regard as having been slain before the foundation of the world, in the design of God, who had decreed the permission of this sacrifice.

If then, Jesus Christ says, that he was before Abraham, only with regard to the design which God had formed, before Abraham had a being, of sending him into the world ; if he says, that he had an heavenly glory, before the world was created, solely in the scheme which God had planned before the world was framed, of giving him this glory, cannot we also say that Jesus Christ was in heaven before he was dispatched to men, in the design which God had formed, from many ages, of sending him ?

If one adopts the meaning which we have given to the three expressions which are here employed, the following will be the sense of the whole passage : No person hath had a perfect knowledge of heavenly truths but the Son of man, who, from many past ages, was in heaven, in the design which God had formed of sending him

him to men, and who in fact hath been sent of God to reveal these truths to them.

I leave the reader to judge if such an explanation be far remote from the design of Jesus Christ, and if it be badly connected; if it be, I consent to its rejection as false.

If the sense, however, which we give to this third expression, does not still appear sufficiently evinced, one may alledge a second, which is not far removed from it. According to this, Jesus Christ might say, that he was in heaven, in respect to the design which God had formed long ago of exalting him thither: the same examples, which we have adduced, perfectly justify this sense: if Jesus Christ says, that he was before Abraham, because that before Abraham existed, he was to be; if Christ says, that he had an heavenly glory before the world was created, because from those periods he was to have it; if St. Paul says in the second to Timothy, that God hath given us grace in Jesus Christ from the eternal ages, because from those times he designed to bestow it upon us; finally, not to amass expressions proper to justify this meaning, if Jesus Christ says, "My desire is that *where I am*, there those should be whom thou hast given me," to denote, that he wishes his disciples may be where he was to be, namely, in heaven; could not Jesus Christ also say in the same sense, that he was in heaven, to signify, that he was to be exalted there?

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If you now ask me which of these two senses appears to me the most natural, I reply, that the first seems to me to connect itself much better with all the ideas of Jesus Christ in the passage we are now explaining, but that the second appears to be better evinced by the instances we have quoted: it is in particular in the second sense in which we ought to understand those words, *What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend where he was before?* that is, ascend to heaven, where he was before to be in the design which God had formed of exalting him thither.

Though these two senses may well be justified by the examples which we have alledged, yet it is surprising that the most eminent divines have not discovered them, and that they have conceived only this third sense, by which one might say, that Jesus Christ was in heaven by his thoughts and desires, which were raised thither; a sense which did not suit their system, and which they have rejected, to suppose, on the passage we have explained, a real ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven before his death.

EXPLANATION

OF A

Passage in the first Epistle of St. JOHN.

We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, by his son Jesus Christ: He is the true God and life eternal. 1 John v. 20.

ST. John, in this verse, speaks of a knowledge of the utmost importance, which Jesus Christ came to publish to mankind, namely, the knowledge of the true God. We know, says he, that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true; that is, we know that the Son of God being come into the world, hath communicated to us the knowledge of the true God, of him who created us, on whom we depend, and to whom we ought to render our homage. At the time that Jesus Christ came into the world, the Heathens, who composed the greatest part of the universe, were ignorant of the true God: they served those who by nature are no Gods; they worshipped the creature, deserting the Creator who is blessed for ever more. But Jesus Christ having come on earth, reconducted them to the service of the true God: he taught

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them that the Divinity could not be like to gold, or silver, or precious stones, carved by man's device; that they ought to turn from these vain things to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all things therein. "We know, says St. John, that the Son of God is come, and hath given us a knowledge to understand him that is true: and we are in him that is true, adds he, by his Son Jesus Christ."

Several interpreters of scripture pretend that by *him that is true*, of whom St. John here speaks, we must understand Jesus Christ; and to convince us of it they translate in this manner; "we are in him that is true, *namely*, in Jesus Christ." But, first, this word, *namely*, which they add, to shew us that by *him that is true*, we must understand Jesus Christ, is not in the text. Secondly, what followeth evinces, that by *him that is true* of whom St. John here speaks, one must understand the same Being whom he had just styled *him that is true* *namely*, the Father of Jesus Christ. We know, he had just said, "that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, that is, to know the true God," as our last Version expresses it: "and we are in him that is true," that is, we are therefore in the true God, in the communion of the true God. Lastly, it is certain, as all the world agrees, that the passage will very well admit the translation we have given it; "We are in him that is
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true, by his Son Jesus Christ," and not, in his Son Jesus Christ: "We are then, says St. John, in him that is true, by his Son Jesus Christ," that is, we are in the communion of the true God, by means of the goodness of Jesus Christ his Son, who was pleased to make him known to us, and to mark to us the method of serving him in a way that would be acceptable to him. "He is, adds he, the true God and life eternal;" that is, this God whom Jesus Christ hath made known to us, is the true God, alone worthy of our adorations and of our homage, and life eternal; he it is who can procure to us a life eternal and infinitely happy.

One may frame two difficulties against this last explication: one may say, first, that the particle, *be*, in the text, relates to its immediate antecedent, and that we ought to understand the words, he is the true God of Jesus Christ, whom St. John had just mentioned: "We are in him that is true by his Son Jesus Christ," he it is, this Jesus is the true God, and life eternal.

But it is certain that the particle *be* is not always governed on its *immediate* antecedent, but sometimes agrees with the *remotest*: for example, in Acts vii. 18. 19. St. Stephen says, that "the Israelites multiplied in Egypt, till there arose a king who knew not Joseph:" after which using the same article as in the present passage, he adds, "he evil-entreated (or, this person, evil-entreated) our fathers." One immediately sees

that this article ought not to agree with *Jeseph*, which however is its immediate antecedent, but with the *new king* whom he had mentioned. One may see another example of this, Acts x. 5, 6. The circumstances then, the nature of the subject in question, must determine the subject to which one must refer this article: now it appears from the whole sequel of the discourse, that in the passage we are illustrating, the article cannot be referred to Jesus Christ, but only to his Father: St. John had said, that the Son of God was come to make us know the true God, that Jesus Christ hath introduced us into the communion of this true God. To whom ought then what he adds to be naturally referred, "he is the true God and life eternal," except to God, whom Christ hath manifested to us to be the true God, and who gives to man eternal life?

A second difficulty is formed from the appellation St. John gives to the being he is speaking of, the true God, and *life eternal*. They say that this last quality is attributed to Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and that therefore it is to him that these words must be referred, "He is the true God, and life eternal."

But though the scripture often calls Jesus Christ the life, eternal life, and leads us to regard him as the person who must put us in the possession of this life; it makes us also regard God his Father, as the Being who is the primary source.

source. "The fountain of life is in thee," says David, Psalm xxxvi. 10. It shews us that this life which Jesus Christ is able to procure us, is originally in his Father, and that it was from him that he received the power to give us this life. "As the Father, says Jesus Christ, hath life in himself, so hath he also given to the Son to have life in himself:" that is, as the Father hath the power of giving life to men, he hath granted this same power to Jesus Christ his Son. The scripture very often calls the God whom we adore, *the living God*. St. Paul in particular styles him, in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the *living and true God*: this being so, could not he, with propriety be styled here, the *true God and eternal life*? Thus, nothing prevents us from following the sense which we have denoted.

It is said, moreover, that one cannot translate the passage as we have done; "we are in him that is true by his Son Jesus Christ;" that the preposition *in*, in the text, cannot be taken in two different senses, first, to signify *in*, we are *in* him that is true; and then to signify *by*, we are in him that is true, *by* his Son Jesus Christ: but it is certain that this preposition is indifferently used in scripture, either to signify *in* or *by*, even in one and the same verse: Thus Colos. i. 16. *For by him were all things created that are in heaven*. First, this preposition signifies *by*, for *by* him, says St. Paul; and afterwards it signifies *in*,

for “*by him* were all things created that are *in* heaven.” It is the same preposition which has these two different senses in the same verse. Thus also, 1 John ii. 3. *By him we know that we are in him*: the same preposition signifies, first, *by*, *by him* we know; and then *in*, that we are *in him*. See also 1 Cor. vi. 11. one might alledge other instances if these were not sufficient.

Finally, one might say that the common version is not contrary to the sense which we give this passage, *We are in him that is true in his Son Jesus Christ*; that is, we are in the communion of the true God, being in the communion of his Son Jesus Christ, the God whom he makes known to us is the true God: but the first interpretation is the most probable.

EXPLANATION

OF A

Passage in the eighth Chapter of St. JOHN.

Abraham your Father rejoiced to see this my day, and he saw it, and was glad. The Jews then said to him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Verily I say unto you, before Abraham was I am.

IN the whole of that discourse, from which these words are extracted, Jesus Christ proposes to prove to the Jews, that he was truly
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sent from God. It is with this view that he said to them, that he was the light of the world, that his doctrine had power to deliver them from the tyranny of sin, to which they were slaves; that those who believed in him would never die; that his Father bore witness to him; that it was his father who glorified him, that is, who made it appear by the strongest authentications, that he acknowledged him for his well beloved Son: and it is with this view, that he farther adds, that Abraham had earnestly desired to see his day, in order to denote that he was the Messiah expected by the ancient patriarchs: *Abraham*, says he, *rejoiced to see this my day*; that is, Abraham, from whom you glory to be descended, ardently wished to see this period in which I am now preaching the gospel, this happy day of which you are witnesses.

Abraham, knowing that God had promised to mankind a great Deliverer, undoubtedly wished to see the time in which he would be ushered into the world, or, at least to know a little more distinctly the advantages which he would procure to the human race. This desire had nothing but what was natural and reasonable: it was also in part satisfied. "*Abraham*, says our Lord, *rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it.*"

One cannot say, that Abraham really saw the time in which Jesus Christ preached the gospel.

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Abraham had been dead several centuries before his advent. Jesus Christ tells us in this regard, that many prophets and kings had desired to see the things which the disciples saw, and had not seen them; but Abraham saw the day of Jesus Christ, because God shewed it to him in a more particular manner. He repeated to him the promise of a Deliverer, and pointed out to him the advantages which he was to procure to men: "In thy seed, says he to him, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Thus Abraham knew, in a more distinct manner, the day of the Messiah: by means of faith he then saw what was to appear several ages after—by that faith, *which, as St. Paul assures us, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen:* that is, which renders present to the mind objects at the remotest distance; and this view inspired him with rapture. This is the most natural meaning of this fifty-sixth verse, as is acknowledged by the greatest part of our divines, and among others by Diodati, and those who composed the marginal annotations in our Bibles.

Though this meaning instantly obtrudes itself upon the mind, the gross and ignorant Jews, inattentive to the discourse of our Lord, and who sought in these words rather what might furnish them with a pretence to accuse him, than what might instruct them, did not comprehend it, imagined that Jesus Christ meant to say
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that Abraham had really seen him, and that our Lord had really seen this patriarch; and to evince the ridiculousness of this opinion, they said to him, "Thou art not yet fifty, and hast thou seen Abraham?"

Our Lord did not stop to explain to them the meaning which they ought to have given these words; he contented himself, in pursuing the same figure, with confirming and justifying what he had told them, assuring them that before Abraham had a being, he was; that is, before Abraham existed, he had been promised to men: "Verily verily, said he to them, before Abraham was, I am:" as if he had said, you ought not to be surprised at what I have said to you, that Abraham saw my day: even before Abraham came into the world, I had been promised to men; I was ever present to the faith of believers; thus I could be the object of the faith of this patriarch; he could see this my day, and rejoice in the prospect of it.

It seems at first that the Jews, not having comprehended the meaning couched under the first words of our Lord, our Saviour ought to have explained it to them, instead of employing again the same figure to confirm what he had said; but these Jews, full of prejudice and passion, had besides very little love for truth, and did not merit from our Lord a clearer explication: it was sufficient, that he justified his opinion in favour of those, who, more attentive

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to what he said, might have comprehended the sense of them. It is in this manner he conducted himself on other occasions. Thus when he had told the Jews, that he was the bread that came down from heaven, that they must eat his flesh in order to have eternal life; upon some Jews treating this language with derision, he did not cease to confirm what he had said in employing the same metaphor. "Some Jews, saith St. John relating this transaction, disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Jesus then said to them: Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you eat not the flesh of the Son of man, and drink not his blood, you will not have life in you." It is true that afterwards, his disciples being also revolted with these terms, he intimated to them that they were not to take them literally: "It is the Spirit, said he to them, which quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life." And perhaps also if the Jews here had proved more docile, been less transported by their passions, and had not obliged Jesus Christ to retire by taking up stones to cast at him, Jesus Christ would have spoken to them more clearly, and explained to them the meaning couched under the metaphor he employed.

AN
ILLUSTRATION

OF THE

First Chapter of the Epistle to the
HEBREWS.

THE author of this Epistle addresses himself to Christians, whose principles a severe-persecution now shook. To support their tottering faith, he elevates their minds to Jesus Christ : he represents to them, with a great deal of energy, both the majesty of the Person whom they would offend, and the infinite misfortunes which awaited them, if, rather than renounce the pleasures of this life, they should shamefully betray the truth. Writing to Jews who had been converted to Christianity, a Jew himself, and very well instructed in the law of Moses, he makes this knowledge contribute to his design; he adorns his subject with metaphors and allusions, which he borrows from the Jewish religion. Every thing the most grand and august which this institution had, prophecy, priesthood,

hood, royalty, he applies to the person of our Lord, and in a manner most transcendent. Thus he accommodates himself to the genius of these Christians, who with transport beheld the Law perfected in the Gospel.

He begins with prophecy ; and in this respect he contrasts Jesus Christ with the prophets of the Old Testament. “ Formerly, says he, God spoke at sundry times, and in divers manners, to the Fathers by the prophets ; but, at length, he hath spoken to us in these last times by his Son, whom he hath made heir of all things, and by whom he made the ages.” First of all he intimates that the New Dispensation is more perfect than the Old. The prophets were only the mere ministers of God, but it is natural to conclude, that the *Son* must be better acquainted with the secret purposes of his *Father*. The prophets often spoke in an obscure manner, they only received a little portion of the divine spirit ; but Jesus Christ received the spirit without measure, he brought life and immortality to light. The prophets had only a limited power, and only addressed themselves to one particular church ; but Jesus Christ was invested with a character much more illustrious ; his commands extend to all the nations of the world, and even to the heavenly spirits, God hath constituted him heir of all things : he employed him as his instrument to unite mankind under the same law,
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to create new heavens and new earth. And if God speaks thus to Isaiah, who was only a servant in the house; "I have covered thee with the shadow of my hand, to establish the heavens and to found the earth;" that is, as he immediately explains it, "to make of Sion a new people," ought one to be astonished that it should be said of the only begotten Son, that "by him God made the ages?"

Nothing was more common in the mouth of Jews than the words *present age* and *future age*: by the latter they understood the kingdom of the Messiah, that king who was the object of warmest hopes. Thus, what the author calls the *ages* by way of distinction, and which he had just denoted under the name of the *last times*, is nothing else but the kingdom of heaven, of which there is such frequent mention in scripture. He opposes the *former* to the *latter* times. "Formerly God spake by prophets, in the last times he hath spoken by his Son, whom he had constituted heir of all things, and by whom he made the ages." He does not say, by whom he had already made the ages; but he says, by whom he made the ages, in consequence of his having established him heir: if you understand the ages of the gospel, the sense is clear and natural: for I cannot believe, with the generality of interpreters, that the author here refers to the original creation of all things: this thought is foreign to his subject, and breaks
unnecessarily

unnecessarily the thread of the argument. It could hardly enter the mind of Jews, and if the author had formed a design of proposing it to them, he would insensibly have prepared them for it, instead of hazarding it in so abrupt a manner. I do not know whether it is altogether reasonable. He who was established heir, is, without doubt, the man Christ Jesus; but was it by the man Christ Jesus that God had created the universe? And is it not manifest, that Jesus, constituted heir, is here distinguished from the Divinity which was united to him, and of which he was the mouth and oracle?

But why should we employ so much reasoning—the author in the sequel of his discourse openly explains himself. After having described the grandeur of the Messiah, he exhorts Christians to be vigilant over their conduct. If the word pronounced by angels was irrevocable, if every disobedience received its just punishment, what future wretchedness must await those who should trample under foot an infinitely superior majesty? For God, adds he, hath not put in subjection to mere angels the world to come, of which we speak: anciently every thing was executed by their ministry, but the new world was made and is governed by the Son of God. Now what is this world, of which we had just spoken, except the *ages* which God made by Jesus Christ? For *age* and *world* is one and the same term in the sacred tongue. The apostle calls

call it the *world to come*, as well to conform to the style of the Hebrews, who gave no other name to the kingdom of the Messiah, as because that this kingdom was not as yet formed; "We see not yet, says he, all things put under him; and even at this day we beg of God that his kingdom may come." But let us pursue the eulogy which he makes of our Lord.

"Who being the brightness of the glory of God, and the impression of his person, supports all things by the word of his power; and after having by himself purged our sins, sat down in heaven at the right hand of the Divine Majesty". It is not permitted to us, weak mortals as we are, to behold the glory of God in its center and plenitude. He dwells, to speak in the language of scripture, in light inaccessible and full of glory, like the effulgence of the sun, which one cannot survey without being dazzled and overpowered; but tempered and reflected by objects, it renders itself agreeable and pleasing to the view. God thus causes his glory to reflect on Jesus Christ; and men contemplated it there with pleasure. This is all that the Greek term imports, which cannot be translated without a periphrasis, and which the common version imperfectly expresses, "He is the splendour of the divine glory." And not merely did this glory appear in the miracles of our Lord, it is here the image of the invisible God. Though a pure spirit by nature, he is engraven, so to

peak, on the person of his Son, he is rendered visible in this admirable portrait. "He who hath seen me, hath seen my Father," said Jesus Christ. Nothing was ever seen of men so perfectly resembling the great original: he is the express image of the divine person.

Philo, the learned Jew, hath said, and almost in the same terms, that man is *the impression and splendor of the most happy Being*: in effect, God formed him in his image, and one still perceives some of his traces. But how imperfect is this delineation when compared with Jesus Christ, in whom dwelt the fulness of the Divinity bodily: never copy so well expressed the beauties of the original; it exhibits, feature by feature, the perfections of the adorable Being. What goodness, what wisdom, what knowledge! "Never man spake like this man," or practised more constantly than he did, those excellent lessons which he inculcated upon others. The same spirit which dictated to him his oracles, was pourtrayed in the least of his actions. But never also was glory so resplendent: never was man invested with a power so immense; absolute master of nature, he commands the winds, and the winds obey him; *he supports all things by the word of his power*. It might be translated, *by the powerful word of God*, but the sense is ultimately the same. "All power, says Jesus Christ, hath been given me in heaven and earth."

Nor

Nor did it less behove, that such an assemblage of graces should be combined in him. The great work of our salvation had been trusted to him; and powerful enemies, our own sins, opposed this noble enterprise. But he gloriously surmounted every obstacle; he did of himself purge away our sins; thus it is, that the apostle, after having extolled him above the prophets, describes him to us under the idea of a perfect priest. The priests of the Old Dispensation purged the people by means of victims and aspersions; but Jesus Christ purges us *by himself*, by his death, "for he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." The blood of beasts could not efface crimes, nor communicate to the soul true holiness; but Jesus Christ penetrates our hearts, he cleanses them, and lights up in them the flame of divine love, an excellent burnt-offering, and the only one capable of placating the Divinity. And after he had acquitted himself of this employment, he went to enjoy the recompense which was due to him: "He sat down in heaven at the right hand of the Majesty of God." Here is the commencement and the true epoch of his regal dignity.

He was made as much more excellent than the angels, as he hath obtained a much greater dignity than theirs. Jesus Christ, as a prophet, reveals to us the truths of salvation; as a priest, he applies his hand to the work, he purifies us,

and sanctifies us ; and as a king, he puts us in possession of his glory. The author now considers him under this last character, and finding nothing on earth comparable to him, goes to search among the celestial spirits, in order still to give greater eclat to Jesus Christ. For to which of the angels did ever God say at any time, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee:" and elsewhere, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." The first passage is understood literally of David, and the second of Solomon : in this interpretation no one can dispute Calvin's judgment. But the Jews collected all these different traits the better to describe the person of the Messiah. These words therefore mean nothing else but, "I this day declare thee king, I consecrate thee as such, and I will maintain thee upon the throne." It is the ordinary style of the scripture to call kings the *Sons of God*; and the term *to beget*, which is added, is only a continuation of the figure, to signify *creating* king.

St. Augustin understands by *to day*, Eternity, as if the point here was concerning eternal generation ; and he hath been followed by the generality of interpreters. But Calvin treats this opinion as a frivolous subtilty, and indeed the following words destroy it ; "Ask, and I will give thee for thine inheritance the nations of the earth." It is manifest that he is here treating of a man, and not of the second person of

the Trinity. St. Augustin was a great light of the church, but St. Paul was still a greater divine than he, and with such a guide, one ought not to fear wandering from the true path. He says, in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, that God had raised up Jesus according to what was written in the second Psalm; "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the commencement of his kingdom, and his ascension into heaven the day of his solemn entrance. Wherefore our author, after having said that he was sat down at the right hand of God, applies to him immediately the passage in this Psalm, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee: in placing thee on my throne, I consecrate thee to day, I declare thee monarch of the whole world; and you angels, who are here present, acknowledge him for your sovereign, do him acts of submission and homage; I except no one, let all the angels of God prostrate themselves before him."

The term, which is translated *prostrate*, signifies every honour that is paid to any one; and in order to determine the degree of it, one must consider the quality of the persons. Lot *prostrates* himself before the two angels; he believed he was doing an act of civility to simple strangers. If Jacob *prostrates* himself before Esau, it is a younger brother who testifies much regard for the elder. If Solomon *prostrates* him-

self in presence of Bathsheba, as a son he honours his mother. When Joseph's brethren *prostrate* themselves before him in Egypt, they meant to show respect to the first minister of Pharaoh. When Nathan *prostrates* himself at the feet of David, in quality of a subject, he does this homage to his prince. But when Daniel *prostrates* himself before God, it is the creature that annihilates itself in the presence of its Creator. Thus when the angels here *prostrate* themselves before Jesus Christ, undoubtedly they attend to the nature of the Object; undoubtedly they acknowledge him as King of the Church, and thereby engage themselves to execute his commands: but undoubtedly also they discriminate God from man; him who gives the authority, from him who receives it: spirits so exalted are not capable of such ambiguity and error.

At least with regard to us, the apostle formally precludes it: his design is to shew that Jesus Christ was made as much more excellent than the angels, as he obtained a dignity greater than theirs; and to this effect he alledges two or three passages: "for to which of the angels hath it been said, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?" And when God presents to the world his first born Son, he saith, "Let the angels prostrate themselves before him." He who was made more excellent than the angels, he who inherited a greater dignity than theirs, could not fundamentally be any

any other than a man, though a man infinitely exalted ; and consequently it is only in quality of man, and of a man elevated far above them, that the angels acknowledge Jesus Christ, and pay him their respect and homage. This is the reasoning of the author, reduced into form, and it perfectly accords with the doctrine of St. Paul. Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself even to suffer the death of the cross, wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a dignity which transcends every other ; that before this dignity of Jesus every knee should bow, both in heaven and earth. Such is the origin of this elevation, such are the eulogies which the scripture attributes to the Son of God. On the contrary, when it speaks of angels, it compares them simply to the winds and the thunder : “ Who maketh winds his angels, and the thunder his minister.”

After having presented to us this new King, the author proceeds to the duration of his reign : but of the Son it is said, “ Thy throne, O God, shall be for ever and ever.” It is not thus in the original, which is, “ God shall be thy throne for ever and ever.” No mode of language is more customary in scripture than to call God our *rock* ; and as the address here is to a king, it figuratively employs the idea of *throne*, to express that he shall never be deposed, that he shall subsist eternally : “ For God himself shall be

thy throne; shall take pleasure in protecting thee: the scepter of thy kingdom is a scepter of righteousness; thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity; wherefore, O God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Here also the version offends against the rule of the Greek language, and it is too arduous an enterprize to mean to violate at once both reason and grammar. Has one ever heard speak of God who has a God? and the gospel, which is so wise and refined, would it teach us such language as this? But when one ascends to the source, there one finds, *The God who is thy God*, that is, the God whom thou adorest, and who is thy benefactor, hath shed upon thy head the sacred oil, and chosen thee preferably to the angels, who alone could dispute this advantage. And in order to represent in the most exalted manner the eternity of this kingdom, the apostle considers the immoveable basis which supports it. If God himself, who is the rock of ages, is its throne and support, no power can shake this great sovereign: carested and protected by the immutable Being, he is privileged from every revolution. "For it is thou, Lord, in the language of the Psalmist he addresses God, who hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; thou art for ever the same, and

and of thy years there shall be no end*." But this place requires us to dwell a little longer upon it.

The first observation which ought to be made is, that in the Psalms this is manifestly spoken of God; and it is hardly possible that the Hebrews, to whom this was written, should have understood it of any other person. When the author applies a passage to Jesus Christ, he informs the reader of it by these expressions, "with regard to the Son," or the like; but here he makes no express application; nor was it necessary: the Jews immediately thought of the supreme Being, and the discourse of itself led them there. It was just asserted that God is the support of Jesus Christ; it was natural to represent him afterwards as a steadfast, permanent, almighty Being, and to this the citation from the Psalms relates. But if the author applies these words to Jesus Christ, and meant to attribute to him the creation of the world, is it possible that he would have done it in a manner so vague, as if the Jews had never doubted it, though nothing however was more directly repugnant to their ideas? And to suppose that they comprehended his opinion, is it possible but it must have revolted them; them, who were ever so jealous of the rights of divinity, and

* According to Diodati, the meaning of this passage is only to show the eternity of Christ's kingdom.

who held in abhorrence every appearance of polytheism. For, place yourselves for one moment in their time: scholastic subtilty, which remedies every thing, was not then called in to succour any doctrine. They then believed, with the best faith in the world, that one and one make two. Whence comes it then that old prejudices do not exclaim on this subject, and that the New Testament does not resound with their complaints? On the contrary, we see here a profound silence reign, not the least trace of objection or difficulty: the point in question, however, is an incomprehensible mystery, which hath produced a thousand disputes among Christians, and which hath always proved to Infidels a stumbling block.

But, not to enter into the general question, let us closely adhere to our author. How does he make it appear to people, how little soever opinionated, that the passage agrees to Jesus Christ? Certainly he gives no proof that it doth. Will it be said, that he does not reason with them, and that he here employs his authority as an apostle? But the contrary appears throughout the whole chapter; and besides, this excursion would not have been made on this supposition. He intends to prove that Jesus is above the angels, because he was invested with a greater dignity. In order to show the truth of this proposition, they assert that he hath applied these words to Jesus Christ; "It is thou, Lord, that

that laideſt the foundation of the earth ;” and that all on a ſudden, abandoning this method, he only alledges here his mere authority. But was it not better to employ it at firſt, and declare plainly, “ Jeſus Chriſt is the Creator of the world ; this truth hurts you ; you ought however to believe it ; I addreſs you from God.” Was it not better to treat them thus, rather than employ ſuch an exuberance of words, ſince at laſt they were to reſt in his authority ? For Jeſus Chriſt being once the ſupreme God, who can doubt that he is ſuperior to angels ; and lo is not this a great truth, with regard to which the Jews had occaſion to be inſtructed ? The difficulty conſiſts in juſtifying the principle, and it does not appear that he intended to eſtabliſh it.

But ſuppoſing that he had a deſign to do it, never author would have deviated farther from the end in view. From the beginning of the chapter to the concluſion, he continually diſtinguiſhes Jeſus Chriſt from the ſupreme Divinity : you would ſay that he made it his ſtudy to intimate that he is only a very excellent creature. He is the mouth of God ; he was made heir ; he is an inſtrument in the hand of God to make the ages. He does not poſſeſs, of himſelf, the Divine glory, he is only the brightneſs of it : he is not the proper effence of God, he is only the image and impreſſion. After having made the purification of our ſins,
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he sat down at the right hand of God ; he was made more excellent than the angels, and he inherits a dignity which had not before. The angels did not know him, they had never paid him their homage : it was necessary, therefore, that they should receive an order for this, which was not given till after the exaltation of Jesus Christ. He was a God and a protector ; and because he was righteous, God anointed him with the oil of gladness, and was well pleased to prefer him before his fellows. After this, all on a sudden, and without any antecedent preparation, we are informed that Jesus Christ is the supreme God who created the heavens and the earth, and who hath always been what he now is ! Was there ever any thing less expected ! What surprize to these poor Jews, who had never studied our Catechisms !

Let us say farther, was there ever any thing so inconsistent ! After having represented him to us as the supreme God, he directly exhibits him under the idea of a man whom God exalted : " Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool." Would it be a thing worthy the apostle, who means to exalt the glory of Jesus Christ, to reduce him to the low standard of a creature, after having stiled him the Almighty Creator ? For after all, to whatever high degree he exalts him, the distance is always infinite between the creature and the Creator. But in the manner in which we
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have explained this passage, the glory of Jesus Christ proceeds always gradually and constantly augmenting. The apostle had said, that God is the throne and the support of Jesus Christ, and that consequently this throne would never be shaken, for it is God who laid the foundation of the earth, &c. and though all things perish, he is always permanent and eternally the same. In fine, he is introduced speaking to his Son in this manner; "Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool." This is a metaphor borrowed from the courts of princes, in which the king sits on the throne with the heir presumptive on his right hand, and his principal ministers on his left. This here is the ultimate and highest degree of the glory of Jesus Christ. Next to the Deity, there is nothing in the world that possesses such pre-eminence of dignity and character, and the apostle could not finish his portrait in a more striking manner than this.

EXPLICATION

OF A

Passage in the Epistle to the PHILLIP-
PIANS.

Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking upon him the form of a servant, becoming like to other men, and was found in fashion as a man, &c. Ch. ii. 5, 6.

IN order to explain these words with exactness and fidelity, the precise meaning of each term is to be considered. There are in the original some expressions a little singular: we will examine each by itself, and according to the order in which it is ranged.

The word *form*, μορφη, signifies *appearance, figure, exterior*, that form which falls under the senses. For example, it is said of our Lord, that he shewed himself to two of his disciples under another *form*, that is, under a different exterior, under the figure of a stranger. To
be,

be, therefore, in the *form of God*, signifies to be the image of God, as Father Bouhours has very well translated it. Not that, properly speaking, God has any form, or can be represented by an image: these figurative expressions mean nothing else but that Jesus Christ resembled in some respect the Divinity. In Paganism they applied the expression μορφαὶ Θεῶν, *forms of Gods*, to their images and representations. With much greater reason may this be said of Jesus Christ, that living image of the Deity, an image, which he traced himself with his own hand, and on which he impressed such sensible marks of his own presence.

Though he was in the form of God, *he thought it not robbery to be equal with God*. This phrase is peculiar to St. Paul, and is scarcely found in the profane writers. Its word for word in the original thus: "he reputed not a prey the being like a God:" that is, he did not regard it as a booty, he did not think that he ought to attribute it to himself. This would be sufficient to authorise our interpretation: it is however proper to confirm it by examples. In the Æthiopic history of Heliodorus, book vii. a woman addresses herself to Theagenes to make him a proposal, and surprised at his refusal she exclaims, "What! make such an offer to a young man, and he not regard it as a rich prize, as a lucky incident, καὶ οὐχ ἀρπαγμα, οὐδὲ ἔρμαιον, ἤνυσται το πρᾶγμα. The apostle

apostle here employs the same expression, which the Romans have also borrowed from the Greeks, or perhaps these last have borrowed from others, among whom it was more in use. Cicero, in his fifth oration against Verres, accuses him of having pillaged Sicily. Says he, "Omnium bona prædam suam duxit. He regarded every one's property as his booty." The Latin phrase perfectly corresponds to the Greek; and if the Roman orator had spoken this language, he would have said *τα πάντα οὐτα ἀπὸ τὰν μὲν ἡγεσάτο.*

Towards the first ages of Christianity, before the Greek language was extinct, and scholastic theology was allied with religion, this passage was understood in this sense. There remains a letter of the churches of Vienna and Lyons, written in the year 177, and one of the most beautiful monuments of Christian antiquity. They here praise the modesty of their martyrs, in that, after the example of Christ, who being in the form of God, did not regard the being like a God as a prize or booty; these Christians, in like manner, were not desirous of being honoured with the distinction of martyrs. Origen, who lived some time after, confirms the same explanation: "I dare assert that the excellency and greatness of Jesus Christ was much more resplendent when he humbled himself, than if he had regarded the being like a God a prize, and

Ulysses, and in the very same terms as St. Paul, "That the inhabitants of Ithaca regarded this prince *as a God*: *ἵσα θεῷ Ἰθακησίου εἰσπορεύσι*:" not that they took him in reality for a God, but only for something great, illustrious, and who possessed, if one may use the expression, more of divinity than of humanity. But here is a character infinitely superior.

Conceive, therefore, of perfect holiness, of meekness, and of benevolence great, beyond all example, of the most accurate knowledge, of an absolute dominion over nature; conceive of a thousand other qualities all assembled in one single person; and if your imagination cannot succeed in executing this portrait, represent to yourselves God himself bending over a great and glorious work, attentive to perfect and adorn it, taking pleasure in delineating and engraving the most striking and amiable traits of his own image—certainly such a figure would resemble God more than a feeble mortal and miserable sinner. This figure of the Deity you behold in Jesus Christ; and yet he made no ostentation of a similitude so glorious: here you behold greatness and majesty, but always attended with the profoundest humility. Far from deriving from his miracles a subject of vanity, he studies to withdraw them from the knowledge of the public. An enemy to pomp and vain glory, he prefers obscurity to splendour;

dour, he pursues not the prey which the ambitious so ardently aspire after. Possessing the form of a God, he shrouds it in a veil of infirm flesh : his likeness to God he did not repute as a rich prize, or sought with avidity, but he voluntarily divested himself of it, assuming the form of a servant, becoming like other men, and in outward appearance was like a mere man.

By the *form of a servant*, which the apostle opposes to the *form of a God*, he understands that poor and abject exterior, under which Jesus Christ chose to appear : especially, that extreme submission which he witnessed at the close of his life, when he suffered himself to be led before his Judges as if he had been a common man. This is what the following words intimate : " He humbled himself even to the death of the cross ; a death with which slaves were punished ;" and to which an allusion is here made, he *assumed the form of a slave*, as Father Bouhours has very properly translated it. Not that he was properly a slave or a servant ; Nature itself acknowledged him for her Sovereign. But he chose to deprive himself of a pomp, though suitable to his dignity, in order to appear as a *mere man*, and under a sordid and wretched exterior. In effect, his life is only one train of infirmities ; exposed to lassitude, to hunger, to thirst, and in a state of indigence, which made him declare of himself, *That*

foxes had holes, and the birds nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head. He was a mark for the arrows of hatred and malignity; he was outraged, calumniated, and treated as an impostor: being followed only by the populace, whilst he was despised by the Rabbies and Priests, and by persons of illustrious families. At last he was condemned to the most ignominious death, confounded with the wicked and profligate, which was the last reproach and ignominy: he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Such was the form of a servant with which Jesus Christ was invested on earth; such was the judgment that vicious people passed on him, at the time that the true disciples, who penetrated these folds, clearly viewed the form of a God, and felt themselves struck with a glory wholly celestial, which shone forth, at various times, in this august object. He had a million of angels at his disposal: he needed only breathe to reduce his foes to dust, to establish a great name in the world, and to draw upon himself the reverence due to his dignity. However, though he had the form of a God, he did not affect to produce it; he was not ambitious of being deemed like a God; he regarded it not as a prey: on the contrary, he annihilated his proper glories, and assumed the form of a servant.

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This is the sense which we give this passage. It corresponds exactly to the signification of the terms: it is moreover conformable to the design of the apostle, conformable to truth and to the conduct which our Saviour maintained. I say it is conformable to the design of the apostle, who meant to exhort the Philippians to humility: "Let nothing be done, says he, out of strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves: look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others." And in order that his exhortation might have more weight, he proposes to them the example of Jesus Christ, who did not arrive at the summit of glory but after having lived in a deep abasement. Being in the form of a God, he did not regard as a prey his likeness to a God, but emptied himself, assuming the form of a servant, wherefore God highly exalted him and gave him a name above every name. This sense is natural, it appears to flow from the source.

I also assert that it is conformable to the truth of the fact. Read the gospel from beginning to end; study the whole conduct of Jesus Christ: you will never see that he affects to appear great in the eyes of men, nor gives himself, so to speak, airs of Divinity. You will never see that he regarded as his prey the distinction of being like, or of being equal to a God, that he ever sought it with eagerness, or

was ever enamoured with his own glory. He never considers himself but as the ambassador of God; he makes his happiness consist in obeying him and in executing his orders: this was the object after which he aspired, this was the prey he incessantly pursued. He refuses the title of God in order to bestow it on God; he declares his Father to be greater than he. When the Jews maliciously accused him of equaling himself to God, he directly acknowledges his dependence. "The Son, says he, can do nothing of himself." In a word, if he does not breathe but by the Father, he breathes after none but the Father, avows that he is nothing without the Father, prostrates himself before the Father, annihilates himself in the presence of his Father. And carefully observe, this spirit of submission, this entire resignation to the will of God, reigns in all his discourses, in all his actions, in all his conduct.

Notwithstanding this evidence, there is commonly attributed to St. Paul another sentiment; it is pretended that he meant to say, *Who being God, himself, he thought it no usurpation to equal himself to God.* But this sense is contrary to the whole conduct which Jesus Christ maintained, as hath been just shewn. It is contrary to the intention of the apostle, who recommends here the duty of humility. "Enter into the same sentiments which Christ had, who being in the form of God, hath a right to place himself

himself on an equality with God." Is there any coherency and connection in this discourse? He would have expressed himself in this manner: he who being in the form of God, and not deeming it an usurpation to equal himself to God, took nevertheless the form of a servant; instead of saying, *he who being in the form of God, did not think it to be an usurpation to equal himself to God, but humbled himself, &c.* In fine, this sense is contrary to the proper terms of the apostle. *God* and *the form of God* are two things very different. *Form of God, image of God, impression of God*, is one and the same thing in scripture, to denote the resemblance which Jesus Christ had to the Deity. To say, that by the form of God one must understand the proper essence of God, is to overthrow the use of all languages. When we say that the angels appeared under human forms, we do not pretend that these forms were the angels themselves. This word constantly signifies exterior, figure, appearance: and if philosophers sometimes make use of it to denote essence, it is a term of art, a term entirely banished from common language; and what probability is there that St. Paul employed it in this acceptance? But what demonstrates the contrary is, the form of a servant which he opposes to the form of a God. Jesus Christ, properly speaking, was never a slave or servant, he had only the ex-

terior appearance of one : he became like unto other men, and was found in fashion as a mere man.

OF THE

HONOUR due to JESUS CHRIST.

WE use the term *adore* to express the honours which are due to the Divinity; and this term is so confined and restricted in our language, at least in the mouth of Protestants, that it instantly awakens the idea of the Supreme Being. This is not the case with the Greek and Hebrew languages, in which one finds no expression that is peculiar and appropriated to this usage. They have only vague terms, which mean in general every honour that is paid to any one. The ordinary word which they employ, signifies prostration; and this token of respect was so common, especially amongst the Easterns, that, not only they prostrated themselves before their kings, but even before persons very far from being considerable.

The thing is acknowledged by all the critics, and on this fact they establish this principle; that in order to determine the degree of honour,

honour, we ought to consider the quality of the persons, and the different relations which they may support. For example, if Lot prostrates himself before the two angels, it is a civility which is paid to strangers : if Jacob prostrates himself before Esau, it is the deference which a younger brother has for an elder : if Solomon prostrates himself before Bathsheba, as a son he honours his mother : if Nathan prostrates himself before David, as a subject he pays this homage to his prince : if the Magi prostrate themselves before Jesus Christ, in quality of new converts to Christ, they pay their veneration to the Messiah : in fine, if Jesus Christ himself prostrate himself before God, it is then the creature which adores its Creator. There is therefore nothing so general, nothing so ambiguous as the act of prostration ; and when interpreters have translated it by *adore*, they have been determined not by the precision of the original, but by the nature of the subject of it. In truth, they have abused this rule more than once, by making it militate for their particular opinions. But this is not the business in question, it is sufficient that the rule is incontestible ; the manner of applying it is only disputed.

If then the opinion of prostration is very equivocal, it cannot constitute the essence of adoration. In effect, the soul cannot adore without the body, and in vain doth the body
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bow itself, if the soul be not directed towards the object of its worship. God is a spirit, and it is his will that those who worship him should worship him with the devotion of the mind, and this interior adoration discriminates what the exterior act appears to confound. When therefore the body prostrates itself, God does not take this homage to his own account—thus far all is common between him and princes. But if at the same time the mind contemplates its Creator, acknowledges him for the sole arbiter of its condition, reposes an unre-served confidence in him, then it is that true devotion is formed, the sole worship which God appropriates to himself, and of which he appears to be jealous when says, *I will not give my glory to another*. It is his will indeed that his ambassadors should be honoured, and in proportion to the character which he impresses on them; but he cannot suffer that his own proper attributes should be ascribed to them, and that men should substitute them in the place of the Supreme Being.

This being laid down, it is asked what sort of honour ought to be paid to Jesus Christ, and if he ought to be worshipped with what is properly called adoration? Sacred History informs us that men prostrated themselves before him, that they addressed to him certain kinds of homage; but it ought not to be inferred from hence, that he is essentially and
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by his own nature the supreme adorable Being. The multitude, who wanted to make him king, prostrated themselves before him : yet they did not look upon him as God, they only saw in him a prophet, and at most the Messiah. One ought then to have recourse here to our principle, and see under what quality the scripture considers Jesus Christ, when it orders us to pay him our homage. This we shall do by examining the following passages.

“ Jesus Christ humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross : wherefore hath God highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This passage is the clearest and the most extensive of any relating to this subject : it furnishes us with a kind of key to discover the meaning of others. It is not the present business to indulge airy speculations, and draw consequences till we lose sight of the subject. The great concern is to adhere religiously to the precise and exact words. No subtilty can evade their evidence : they appear written with a sun-beam. It is not for us to frame the objects of our worship, but it is for us to receive those which God presents to us as such ; and we are commanded to bow our knees before Jesus Christ,

Christ, merely for this reason, that God hath highly exalted him. The apostle doth not say, that Jesus Christ is the adorable Being of himself: if he had been of this opinion, would he have forgotten the greatest of all the motives? Would he have diminished so much, or rather, would he have annihilated the glory of Jesus Christ? For, in fine, he does not receive honours, but in consequence of God's exalting him, is nothing, in comparison of that Being who is adorable by his own nature. If then one prostrates one's self before Jesus Christ, one acknowledges thereby that he hath been exalted above all the creatures: and if every tongue confesses that he is Lord, it is always with this restriction, that he is only Lord to the glory of God the Father. So true is it, that the glory of the Son is dependent on that of the Father: it flows from God as its source; it is just that it should return to God as its end. The moment it misconceives its original, it is dissipated and lost. *I seek not my own glory, says the Saviour of the world, but the glory of him that sent me: if I glorify myself, my glory is nothing.*

“The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father.”

Our Lord here complains of the Jews, who treated him with contempt, and endeavoured to take away his life. It is not the concernment of his own glory which wrests from him this complaint;

complaint; but he sees with grief the Divine Majesty attacked and outraged in his person: *for whosoever honoureth not the Son, adds he, does not honour the Father who sent him.* The insult which is offered to an ambassador recoils upon his master. If then Jesus Christ commands, that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father, it is not that he means to equal himself to God; he had just protested the contrary in the nineteenth verse: he only assumes here the title of God's Envoy; and far from aspiring to the same honours, he only appears sensible of what wounds the glory of his Father.

The particle *as*, which he employs, does not denote equality, but a mere resemblance. Ordinarily it expresses the motive or example, and it only exhibits the fact without determining the manner of it: for example, *Be ye perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect*, not in the same degree of perfection, but be ye perfect since your heavenly Father is perfect. *Love one another as I have loved you*; not in the same degree of love, that is impossible; but love you one another, since I have also loved you. *I have given to them the glory which thou hast given to me, that they may be one as we are one*; not in the same degree of union, but that they may be united together, since thou and I are united. *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have offended us*; that is, Lord, we hope from thy mercy that thou wouldst forgive us

us our sins, since through that goodness which is essential to thee, thou desirest that we should forgive the faults of others. There are a thousand examples of this kind which it would be tedious to collect together.

In like manner, "the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father, for he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the father who sent him." This doth not import the same degree of honour; and Jesus Christ intended to convey this sentiment: the Father hath invested his Son with the power of judging the world; and therefore you ought to honour the Son, since you make a profession of honouring the Father; for in honouring the Son, you honour the Father who sent him; and in despising the character of the Son, you outrage the majesty of the Father. But, further, he who sends is always more honourable than the person sent; he who hath in himself the power to judge, ought to be honoured in quality of Judge supreme; and he who hath received from another this power, cannot be honoured but as subordinate judge. The thing speaks of itself. Jesus Christ does not arrogate to be honoured, but because he is sent of God, and hath received from him the power of judging mankind. He does not even exact this honour but because the glory of his Father is interested in it, and by no means on his own account.

count: so far is he from setting off himself here for that Being who is adorable in his own nature.

And again, when he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, he saith, *Let all the angels of God worship him.*

The author had just said with regard to Jesus Christ, that he was made as much more excellent than the angels, as he had by inheritance a more excellent name than theirs. This is afterwards proved, 1. From the circumstance of God's having consecrated and constituted him king: 2. From the angels prostrating themselves before him: and the apostle, according to the custom of his time, expresses his thoughts in scriptural language, by accommodating to his subject three passages: The first, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*: The second, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son*: The third, *Let all the angels of God worship him.* However, two things appear to me incontestible: the one is, that God is here really distinguished from Jesus Christ,—God, who consecrates and who introduces his first-born Son, from Jesus Christ who is consecrated and afterwards presented to the angels.—The other is, that it is in quality of a man, and of a man more excellent than the angels, that Jesus Christ is represented to us in this place; “He was made as much more excellent than the angels, as he hath obtained by inheritance a more excellent

excellent name than theirs :” and to illustrate this proposition, the writer alledges the testimony of scripture : For God saith, when he introduceth his first-born Son into the world, *Let all the angels of God worship him.* Now, he who was made more excellent than the angels, and who inherited a name more excellent than theirs, could only be a creature ; and consequently it is as a creature exalted above them that the angels consider Jesus Christ, and render him their respect and homage.

It does not follow from their prostrating themselves before him, that they regard him as the self-adorable Being. When the herald who preceded Pharaoh and Joseph cried out to the Egyptians, “ Bow the knee,” they did not fail distinguishing their sovereign from the new minister, though the honours they paid them were confounded in one and the same act. And the angels, who are still more enlightened, are far from incurring a mistake here. When God introduces his first-born Son, undoubtedly they distinguish the Supreme Being from a man ; him who gives the authority, from him who receives it. And they are so far from taking this new King for the self-adorable Being, that they had no knowledge of him before, and did not address their homage to him till after God had presented him to them. The Being, who by his own nature is adorable, has no need of an introducer ; he has only to shew himself, in
order

order to draw upon himself the respect which is due to him. With regard to this First born Son, it was necessary that God should introduce him to his court : it was not till after an order from him that the angels worshipped him. By this act of submission, they therefore acknowledged that God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name : they confess that Jesus Christ is their Lord, but with this reserve, they are not ignorant that if he hath been constituted Lord, it is solely to the glory of God the Father.

“ To Him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be praise, honour, glory, and power, for ever and ever.”

These words were pronounced in a vision which St. John had. It will be proper to relate the principal circumstances of it. “ A throne was erected in heaven, and there was one who sat upon the throne. The four living creatures ceased not to cry, Holy, Holy, Holy; Lord God Almighty, who wast, who art, and who shalt be. And the four and twenty elders fell down before him who sat upon the throne, and worshipped him who liveth for ever and ever, saying, Worthy art thou, O Lord; to receive glory, honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and by thy will they subsist. Then I saw a book in the right hand of him who sat upon the throne; and an angel proclaimed with a loud voice, Who is worthy to

open the book? Now no one had power to open or to read it. And I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the book. Now there was between the throne and the four living creatures a Lamb, as if he had just been slain. He advanced, and took the book out of the right hand of him who sat upon the throne: then the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. I heard also every creature say, To him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb be praise, honour, glory, and power, for ever and ever."

It is evident, that he who sat upon the throne is an object really distinct from the Lamb; and it would be unnecessary to insist upon a thing so clear. God holds then here the first rank, as a King sitting upon a throne; and after him Jesus Christ, under the figure of a Lamb who hath been slain. The first of these two images suits extremely well to the Supreme Being; and the second describes to us, very naturally, a man who died for the salvation of the world. Here you see the Deity essentially support himself, and secure, by his own proper nature, homage and adoration. Here, a Lamb, favoured of God, presents itself, and which receives not honours but only because it is found worthy to open the book. This distinction is one of the principal foundations

foundations of the vision, and it is upon it we will erect the following explication.

The text describeth him who sat upon the throne as being exalted above the Lamb; and it does not follow that they are equal in dignity because their praises are combined together, and because they receive the same external homage. Two objects, in other respects very different, may possess something in common, and preserve, however, their natural subordination. When the sacred history says of the Israelites, that they worshipped God and the king, after David had finished his prayer, it is not that they confounded the Almighty and the king, though the external homage was the same: but in prostrating themselves before the Almighty, they adored the Creator of the world; and in prostrating themselves before their prince, they acknowledged him for their lawful sovereign. When it is also said of the Israelites, that they believed in God and in Moses, this doth not import that they had in Moses precisely the same confidence that they ought to have in God: but they believed in God, because he is truth itself; and they believed in Moses, because he spoke to them on the part of God. When the apostles say, "It pleased us and the Holy Ghost," it is not that they presumed to equal themselves to the Holy Ghost: but it pleased the Holy Ghost, because he is the Supreme Arbiter; and it pleased the

apostles, because they were animated by the Holy Ghost. When St. John himself utters this devout wish, "Grace and peace be unto you from him who was, who is, and who shall be; from the seven spirits who stand before the throne, and from Jesus Christ," his design is not to erect the seven spirits into as many divinities; for even by that circumstance *standing* before the throne, they manifest their dependence in regard to God, and the attention they pay to execute his commands. But St. John wishes peace to the faithful from him who was, is, and shall be, as the sole and eternal source of true felicity; and he wishes them peace from the seven spirits, as these were to be the instruments and scourges with which God was going to punish the enemies of his church.

When, therefore, the creatures say here, "To him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be glory and praise," it is not that they confound the Lamb with him who sat upon the throne; but they render to God what appertains to God, and to the Lamb what appertains to the Lamb. They praise and honour them conformably to our principle; that is, each according to his nature and according to his qualities. They praise and honour God as their Creator, and the sole adorable Being: for they had just said to him, "Lord, thou art worthy to receive glory and honour, because thou hast created all things, and by thy will they

they subsist." But they praise and honour the Lamb as him who redeemed them by his blood, and who was found worthy to open the book: for they had just said to him, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to unseal it, because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God." Such is the striking distinction which they observe even amidst their confused and mingled acclamations. And this subordination, which obtains between God and the Lamb, subsists so entirely, that the Lamb himself, when praising God is the concernment, joins his voice to the voices of the living creatures. Whilst he was upon earth, and after he is glorified in heaven, he never ceased to bless the Creator, and to pay his profoundest gratitude. "I will declare thy name to my brethren, and I will sing praises to thee in the midst of the church. Him that overcometh I will make a pillar to the temple of my God, that is, of the God whom I invoke and whom I adore." A few verses after there is mention made of the Song of Moses and the Lamb; "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Who is there who will not fear and celebrate thy name, for thou alone art holy." What Moses had sung after the departure from Egypt, the Lamb applies to our spiritual deliverance. In fine, as the adorations had begun with him who sat upon the throne, and without the Lamb having any part in them,

they also terminate in God alone: and St. John, after having heard the concert of the living creatures, perceived the four and twenty elders, who fell down and worshipped him who liveth for ever and ever. And even he is always worshipped singly in the sequel of the vision, which evinces that he is essentially adorable: whilst they did not prostrate themselves before the Lamb but on the day that he was installed and deemed worthy to open the book. Consequently, the honours which he receives, are attached to his employment, and by no means to his own nature.

From all these passages it is easy to conclude, what sort of honour we owe to Jesus Christ: they teach us, with one unanimous consent, that it is in virtue of his exaltation, and not of any right which he essentially possesseth. On the other hand, we see not in any respect that he is the self-adorable Being; and for myself, I confess, that such silence very much strikes me: at least it merits some attention; and that one should suspend for a moment one's prejudices, before one incur a rash and precipitate adoration. One ought, therefore, carefully to consult the scripture, for fear of worshipping we know not what. Every time that it commands me to pay my homage to Jesus Christ, it always adds certain restrictions, it says so evidently the rights of the Creator, that they cannot receive from it any derogation. On the contrary,

trary, they only appear to be better established: for it tells me that I ought to honour Jesus Christ; sometimes, because God hath highly exalted him, and invested him with a dignity superior to the angels; and sometimes because the glory of the Supreme is here interested; in that he sees himself honoured, when we respect the character of his Ambassador. Thus, I regard Jesus Christ as the great and infallible teacher: I admire his power, his virtues, his extraordinary talents: I acknowledge him for my superior, and as the person who is one day to be my judge: I acknowledge that, after God, he is the author of my salvation: I am penetrated with gratitude towards him: I celebrate his memory; and the honours which I render him keep pace with the measure of my praises. I abase myself before the king of kings; I respect in him the image and capital production of the Deity: above all, I honour him when I strive to obey him, and when I take his precepts for the rule of my life. This is the manner of honouring Jesus Christ, at least it appears to me to be the true one; and it is permitted to every one to follow those sentiments, which, after diligent enquiry, he believes to have the sanction of revelation,

OF THE
KNOWLEDGE which JESUS CHRIST

attributes to himself when he says,
*All the churches shall know that I am he who
search the reins and hearts, and I will give
unto every one according to his works.*

THIS means, that he knows the most secret thoughts, and that in consequence of this knowledge he will one day judge the world. The question is to evince, if he knows the recesses of the human heart, by a quality which is natural and essential to him, or if he knows them because God manifests them to him: this is what cannot be decided by the very words of our Lord.

It is a rule founded on good sense, and adopted by all interpreters, that one must explain vague and indeterminate passages, by others which restrain the subject or determine it more precisely. Now, when one consults the scripture, one sees here that all the talents which Jesus Christ possessed, he held not of himself, but of God. Says he, *All things are given me of my Father. The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth*

sheweth him all things. The things which I have heard from him, I declare to the world. I can do nothing of myself, but I speak what my Father hath delivered to me. I have made known to you every thing which I have heard from my Father. He whom God hath sent publisheth the words of God, who giveth not the spirit by measure to him. The same Evangelist says, The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him. And afterwards, there is mention made of a book which God gave to the Lamb, and which contained every the most secret transaction in the world.

These passages and an infinite number of others, which one might here alledge, shew us the primary source from which Jesus Christ derives the knowledge of what passes in the hearts of men, and by means of which he will render to every one according to his works. For my Father hath given me power of exercising judgment, and I judge as I hear, wherefore my judgment is just. In effect, this knowledge of the hearts of man is absolutely necessary to him, in order to discriminate hypocrites from worthy people, and bad intentions from good. But as there was not the same necessity that he should know when this awful time should arrive, so he makes no difficulty of acknowledging to his disciples, that the son of man was ignorant of the day of judgment.

OF THE
POWER which JESUS CHRIST

ascribes to himself, when he says to the
Paralytic, *Tby sins be forgiven thee.*

THE Jews had generally this opinion, that
maladies, especially if they were invete-
rate and incurable, were ordinarily the punish-
ment of some sin, whether they were a natural
consequence of it, or were sent supernaturally.
They even believed with the Pythagoreans and
several Eastern nations, that souls were created
before God united them to bodies; and in order
to punish them or to recompense them, he
lodged them in vigorous and well made bodies,
or plunged them into infirm and deformed
ones. Witness what the Author of Wisdom
makes Solomon say; "I was a goodly child,
and a good soul fell to my lot; or rather, being
good, I came into a body exempt from every
blemish." Witness the apostles, who, in re-
gard to the man who was blind from his birth,
enquired of our Lord, "Who had sinned, this
man or his parents, that he should be born
blind." Witness also the Pharisees, who say to
this

this same person : “ Thou wast born in sin, and dost thou teach us, thou, who wast born with this defect, but on account of the sins which thou committedst in another life, or because those who were the instruments of thy birth, were actually sunk in depravity.”

Let us now proceed to the immediate consideration of this passage. The paralytic desired to be cured, and our Lord replies to him, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* To pardon sins, is properly to deliver from the punishment which they have merited, and this is the signification of the Greek term. We have seen that the Jews regarded certain maladies as a consequence of sin, and a chastisement of God. Perhaps this man had lost the use of his limbs by his having lived in debauchery and irregularity. As if Christ had said to him ; Cease, my son, to afflict and deject yourself : you have obtained the pardon of those sins, which have drawn down upon you this just punishment of heaven, and you are going to be delivered from your malady. The question then is not here of a general pardon of all his sins, which is never offered but on condition of repentance, nor of deliverance from the punishments of the other life, which depend on the immutable laws of justice.

To be convinced of the truth of our interpretation, it suffices to attend to the sequel of the story. The Jewish doctors, full of envy against Christ,

Christ, and always ready to give an invidious turn to his words, treated them as blasphemous, as if he usurped a right which only appertained to the Deity. But in a spirited manner he repels the calumny: "Why, says he to them, do you form such a rash judgment: for which is easier, to say, thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, rise up and walk? If I can cure this man, and deliver him from the punishment of his sins, cannot I say to him, without violating the glory of God, the sins which have drawn upon thee this punishment are forgiven thee? Does not the one suppose the other? And to shew you in fact that I have power to pardon sins on earth, or to take away the punishments with which they are often followed in this life, Rise, said he to the paralytic, and go to thy home.

But let us make the greatest concession, and suppose, that one must understand here the general pardon of all his sins; does it follow from this that Jesus Christ is equal to the Deity? By no means; for does not he himself say to the apostles, "Whosoever sins you forgive, they shall be forgiven? It remains therefore to know, if he pardons them by his own pure authority, which he neither here or any where else asserts; or if he pardons them only in virtue of a power received from God, which the gospel clearly intimates, "The multitude, it continues, glorified God, who had granted such power to men."

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This further appears from the words of our Lord. According to him, it was as much permitted to say to the paralytic, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; as to say to him, Rise and walk. He lays it down as a principle, which the Jewish doctors could not contest, that it was permitted him to say, "Rise and walk;" whence he concludes, that he could say without blasphemy, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Now this consequence would not be just, if the absolute power of forgiving was attributed to him: for this right does not appertain but to God alone, and the gift of healing may be found in a mere prophet.

Add to this the perpetual language of Jesus Christ, who refers every thing that he did to the influence and support of his Father. "All power is given to me," and consequently, this of pardoning. "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son," that is, the power of condemning and of absolving. "I judge as I hear:" he could not then absolve of his own mere suggestion. "To sit on my right hand or on my left, is not mine to give;" this distinction is only for those for whom my Father hath prepared it. If he has not the privilege of glorifying, he has not that also of justifying; for the one is a consequence of the other. If from the master you pass to the disciples, they will tell you, that if he pardons sins, it is in virtue

true of his exaltation and not of his divine nature: for it is he whom God hath raised by his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give to Israel repentance and remission of sins. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews will tell us also, that no one attributes to himself the honour of offering for sins, if he is not called of God; and that also Jesus Christ did not glorify himself to be high-priest. If he could not himself offer for sins, much less could he of himself pardon them.

I shall conclude with this argument: he who is our interpreter with God, to obtain of him the forgiveness of our sins, has not originally and of himself the power of forgiving us. Now the scripture every where represents to us Jesus Christ as our intercessor with God, to obtain from him the forgiveness of our sins: Jesus Christ therefore cannot have originally and of himself the power of forgiving them us.

See a remarkable note of Diodati on that passage in the Hebrews; "Thou, Lord, hast laid the foundation of the earth." The sense of this place as it is here alledged, is no other but that the kingdom of Christ which is manifestly spoken of in that passage, Psalm cii. 26. is eternal, and not perishable like the state of the world. Observe how peremptorily he excludes every other other sense: the meaning of this passage, says he, *is no other except, &c.*

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I felicitate myself on having the concurrence of this most excellent man, one of the brightest luminaries that shone in the synod of Dort.



OF THE
H O L Y S P I R I T.

THE Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, in the primary and natural sense, signifies only the power of God, or the virtue by which he operates. To be convinced of this, it would be sufficient to attend to the etymology of the word, which in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, means the *breath of God*, and which seems to denote rather a quality, than a person distinct from God himself.

But various passages of scripture put this beyond a doubt. "When thou hidest thy face, says the psalmist, the creatures die; but if thou sendest thy *spirit*, they are immediately created." "The *spirit* of God made me, says Elihu, and the *breath* of the Almighty quickened me." "God, says Job, made the heavens by his *spirit*," that is, by his power and agency, as the sequel shows.

This term hath preserved the same signification in the books of the New Testament. "The Holy Spirit, says the angel to Mary, shall

shall come upon thee from on high, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." The Holy Spirit, and the power of the Most High, as is here evident, is one and the same thing in the style of the angels. "I am going to send you, said Christ to his apostles, what my Father promised me, but do you stay in Jerusalem till you be endowed with *power from on high*:" this is what our Savior calls the Holy Spirit, which was to descend on the apostles upon the day of Pentecost. "You know, says St. Peter, how God animated Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Ghost* and with *power*." "My discourse and my preaching, says St. Paul, consisted not in those persuasive words which human wisdom employs, but in a demonstration of *spirit* and of *power*."

From all these passages it is evident, that *Holy Spirit*, *power*, and *agency*, are terms of the same import in the New Testament. And this virtue resides essentially in God, as in its source and only principle, from whence it hath been diffused as it were into several small rivulets in the prophets and apostles.

2. But by a figure, very customary in all languages, and principally in the Eastern languages, it frequently happens, that they personify what are merely simple qualities, and speak of them as they would of a person. For example, when we say that the Supreme Wisdom is admirable in every thing that it does, we under-
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stand the Creator considered under the quality of Wise. Thus the Holy Spirit, though he is only the power and influence of the Deity, is sometimes taken for the person of God himself, in as much as it works, as it operates; and sometimes even for holy men, to whom God communicates his power and his influence. I say that it is taken for God himself, witness the words of St. Peter to Ananias; "Whence comes it that Satan hath filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit;" that is, to God, as it is directly after explained: "Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God."

3. I assert also, that it is sometimes taken for those holy men to whom God communicates his power and influence. "Believe not *every spirit*," says St. John, but try the spirits whether they be of God;" that is, believe not every teacher lightly, who says he is inspired of God, but examine if he be truly so. "Hereby know we," adds he, that a spirit is from God:" every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. "It seemed not good to us and to the Holy Spirit," say the apostles, that is, to us who are inspired of God, and invested with his power and his authority. "Baptize the nations into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;" that is, in order to be called the disciples of the Father, who was revealed under the Old Testament; and of the Son, who teaches us under the gospel; and of

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the apostles, who are inspired of God, and whose determinations ought to be regarded as oracles.

4. By a signification, which approaches very near to the preceding, it is also taken for the spirit of man, but then it is a spirit that is enlightened, sanctified, renewed, and endowed with gifts both ordinary and extraordinary; such, in a word, as the spirit of the apostles became in the day of Pentecost. This is that spirit that Jesus Christ had promised them a little before his death; not that, properly speaking, it was not the same spirit which they had before; but one may say that they then received a new spirit, by the sudden and surprising revolution which was made in their persons. A spirit of consolation, of force, and of courage, instead of that timid and dejected spirit, which they discovered at the appearance of the least danger. A spirit, which was to recall to them every thing that Jesus Christ had said to them, while before they were but little attentive to the discourse of their master. A spirit of truth, which was to lead them into all the truths, in opposition to the errors and prejudices with which their minds were filled. A spirit, which would no longer speak its own private conceptions, but faithfully declare every thing it had learned, very different from that rash spirit which hazarded its opinions too lightly, and often apprehended for truth, what had only the appearance of it: in fine, a meek, charitable, moderate spirit, in opposition

position to that spirit with which they were animated when they wanted to make fire descend from heaven to destroy the unbelieving Samaritans.

5. The Holy Spirit also signifies, very frequently, the holy dispositions or qualities of the spirit which the gospel gives us. This is so clear and so little contested, that we will not stay to give illustrations of it.

6. Behold here five different significations of the term Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God. It signifies 1. the power or influence of the Deity, whether it be considered in God, or in holy persons to whom God communicates it. 2. It is taken for the person itself of the Deity. 3. For men who are animated with this spirit. 4. For the spirit of man, as being enlightened and renewed by an extraordinary grace. 5. For those dispositions of spirit which the gospel requires. To which one may add a sixth sense, which is not different from the second, only as it is supported on a different reason. It is this: the scripture sometimes representing God under the idea of a man, attributes to him also a soul or a spirit; and it speaks of this spirit of God, as we speak of the spirit of man. "Who knows," says St. Paul, what is in man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, adds he, no one knoweth what is in God, except the spirit of God; that is to say, God himself. "Take heed," says he in another place, that you grieve

not the spirit of God." This signifies, oblige not God to repent of the favours he hath bestowed upon you; as it is said of St. Paul, that he grieved at the view of the idolatry of the Athenians.

All the rules which have just been established are very conformable to scripture and to the genius of language. They also accord extremely well with the unity of God, which is here a kind of fixed point, from which, in this dispute, one ought never to deviate. One cannot say the same of a seventh sense which is very frequent with divines, which is, to understand by the Holy Spirit a person really distinct from God the Father; or, to speak of their art with more exactness, the third person of a Trinity in the Divine Essence. This new sense, if it is true that one can call it sense, of words which are totally strangers to it, besides that it is useless and superfluous in explaining sacred scripture, appears to me to contain insurmountable difficulties.

For if the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from God the Father, whence comes it that the scripture does not say so in express terms? and the more, as it seems to intimate the contrary, and precipitate us into error, when it speaks of the Holy Spirit, as if it was nothing but the agency of God. Is it for this reason divines alledge, that there must be in mysteries a mixture of light and darkness; light enough to illuminate

nate those who have the disposition to believe, and darkness enough to blind the unbelievers; as the cloud, which was luminous on one side to the Israelites, but was nothing but darkness on the side of the Egyptians.

If the Holy Spirit is a divine person, whence comes it, that the scripture never calls him God, and seems even to distinguish him from the Deity every time that it calls him the Spirit of God? For when we say the will of man, by this itself we distinguish it from the man.

Whence comes it, that it hath never commanded us to worship the Holy Spirit, to invoke him, to render him our homage, since he hath so great a part in the work of our salvation?

Why ask the Father for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, instead of addressing him, who on this scheme is the author and source of them?

Whence comes it, that the scripture omits the Holy Spirit in those passages where, on these principles, he ought to have been mentioned? "This is eternal life, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:" why not speak of the Holy Spirit? St. Paul always introduces at the head of his Epistles, "Grace and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ;" why not here also mention the Holy Ghost? "We have fellowship with the Father and with the Son;" why not also add the Holy Ghost, of which we are the temples? and an infinite num-

ber of like passages, where the Holy Ghost is always omitted. But what is more, the sacred writers often put angels in his place. "I conjure you in the presence of God, of Jesus Christ, and his elect angels.—Him who shall overcome, I will proclaim his name before my Father and before his angels.—But he, who shall be ashamed of me, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and the glory of his Father and the angels.—Grace and peace be from him who is, who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before the throne and before Jesus Christ." Why introduce angels into the third place, where the Holy Ghost should naturally have come, if it were true that he is a Divine Person, and the third in the Trinity?

Whence comes it that Jesus Christ is always called the Son of God, and never the Son of the Holy Ghost, though he was conceived of him? When the angel says to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, wherefore that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God;" whence comes it, that it is not rather said, the Son of the Holy Ghost? And consequently there will be two Fathers and two Sons in the Trinity: but whence come it, that according to scripture, there is one Father only, and one Son only?

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EXPLANATION of that PASSAGE,

Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

THESE words which Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples, before he ascended to heaven, contain two principal things: 1. A command to spread throughout the whole world the doctrine of the gospel, "Go, and teach all nations;" or, according to the proper signification of the Greek term, 'make disciples among all nations. 2. The establishment of baptism with the design of that ceremony; "baptizing them in (or rather, for) the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." In effect, the preposition in the original expresses the end and design which one proposes to one's self. Let us attempt then to discover what was the view of our Lord when he ordered his disciples "to baptize for the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Jesus Christ, who lived among the Jews, ordinarily makes allusions to their customs, frequently even borrows their own terms, as might be proved from an infinite number of examples. This expression of *baptizing for the name of a*

thing is found in their formularies or liturgies, When they admitted a pagan into their religion, they baptized him *for the name of proselyte*, that is, for to be henceforth called proselyte, and for to enjoy privileges annexed to this denomination. If he was retained in the service of any one, *he was baptized for the name of servant*; and if he was set free, *he was baptized for the name of free*, that is, for to be called servant or free, accordingly as it pleased his master to favour him.

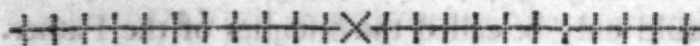
St. Paul also uses the same phrase in the same acceptation, when he reproaches the Corinthians with their schisms and divisions, a prelude of that party spirit which hath for a long time reigned in the Christian Church. "One said, I am the disciple of St. Paul; another, I am of of Apollos; a third, I am of Cephas;" pretty much as they now say, I am a Lutheran, I am a Calvinist. The apostle condemns, as a bad thing, this extravagant attachment to particular teachers: he wants to crush the evil in its birth, and to abolish those odious titles which serve as a standard to religious mutiny. With this design, he calls back the Corinthians to their baptism; Were you baptized, says he to them, *for the name of Paul*, that is, for to bear my name, and to call yourselves my disciples? You were baptized for the name of Christ, and you ought to denominate yourselves Christians and not Paulinists.

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At present it is easy to understand these words, "Go, and make disciples among all nations, baptizing them for the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." They signify: Baptize them for to be denominated disciples of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: the disciples of the Father, who was revealed in the Old Testament; disciples of the Son, who had just spoken to them in the Gospel; disciples of the Holy Spirit, which was to instruct them by means of the apostles. The Jews only received the old revelation, and could only be called the disciples of the Father. But the faith of Christians is of much larger extent: they embrace also the doctrine of Jesus Christ; and besides the character of disciples of the Father, they moreover call themselves the disciples of the Son. In fine, as the Son had not time to regulate all things, and, after his ascension into heaven, the church had still need of a living authority upon earth, we are called to hearken to a third Instructor, the Holy Spirit, which speaks to us by the mouth of the apostles. Wherefore it is, that when they decide a contested point, they say, "It pleased us and the Holy Spirit;" and those who submit to their doctrine make a profession of being the disciples of the Holy Spirit.

These are the three great and infallible authorities which in our baptism we solemnly profess to follow: but, ultimately, it must not be

thought that there is any distinction among them. They all three constitute but one and the same authority. As the Israelites, who believed in God and in Moses*, had not two different objects of their faith, and only believed in God alone, who spoke to them by the ministry of Moses; we Christians also do not believe but only in one and the same God, who first spoke to us by Moses and the prophets, afterwards by his Son, and last of all by the apostles.



A

GENERAL IDEA of the EUCHARIST.

NOTHING is more clear, nothing more simple than the Eucharist, in the manner in which it was established by Jesus Christ. What it offers to our senses is nothing else but bread and wine; and what it exhibits to the mind under these tokens is an event very easy to comprehend.

But in proportion to its farther and farther remoteness from its original, it lost much of this amiable simplicity. It was imagined, that

* The Fathers, under the old dispensation, were baptized into Moses, or acknowledged themselves the disciples of Moses.

in order to render it more august, it had occasion for ornaments; and to conciliate more respect to it, it ought to be rendered mysterious,

At last it hath undergone the same fate, which almost all things in religion have experienced. Divines, according to their custom, have monopolized it, though it was instituted particularly for the people; and by a thousand subtilties, which they have contrived to weave around it, they have appropriated it to themselves in such a manner, that it is inaccessible to the greatest part of understandings, even of those who value themselves on being better instructed than the vulgar.

Happy too would it have been for the world, had divines contented themselves with this, and if this abuse had not produced consequences so deplorable: hence have arisen those differences and animosities, which incessantly cause new disorders: hence those schisms so ruinous to the church, which tear and divide it so cruelly. Thus it is that the Eucharist, which ought to conciliate and harmonize mankind, produces a quite contrary effect, and serves, so to speak, as a standard to their religious dissensions.

Instead of extinguishing all their discords, or at least suspending them for one day, instead of all then regarding themselves as the disciples of the same master, whose memory they unite to honour, and as children of the same family, who all cherish the same hopes, it is precisely
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then that they are split into divisions, and the spirit of party summons all its forces; every one ranks under the banners of his sect; they vehemently clamour one to another, "No communion to-day:"—they erect altar against altar, they fulminate anathemas from all sides: and if the sentence was ratified in heaven, God knows what would be the consequence. Happily he hears not the prayers of those men, who know not what spirit they are of.

Strange! What was destined in its nature to cement union, is itself become the signal of war! That which was a festival of love and benevolence among the primitive Christians, and which they called, for this purpose, by the name of *Agape*, that this should have thrown among their descendants an apple of discord, and with it all the horrors of division!

One cannot, therefore, militate more directly against the genius and design of the Eucharist. In general, nothing can be farther from religion than subtilty; it will never in itself give occasion to contests: and the ceremony now in question is the only thing in the world that ought to be the least subject to them. Considered as a practice merely external, there was a necessity for its being very simple, and exempt from refinement; otherwise the Gospel, whose character it is to be spiritual, so far from introducing it, would never have suffered it. Thus it proposes it in a plain, natural manner, which makes us
suspect

suspect nothing of the marvellous ; it proposes it even in two or three words, which exhaust the subject.

After this, how could it open such a vast field to divines, so as to furnish them with two or three hundred very knotty questions ? There would indeed be occasion for astonishment, if they flowed naturally from scripture, and one did not know, upon other occasions, the fruitfulness of the human imagination, to which it is best to yield all the honour of these discoveries. But such a source as this, does it not beget some distrust, and form some prejudice against these speculations ? Thus we shall abandon them with less regret to ascend to the primary institution of the true Eucharist, such as it is described by the sacred historians.

Jesus Christ came into the world to banish from thence ignorance and superstition, to teach mankind a doctrine which would lead them back from vice to virtue, from the misery, in which they lived, to a true and solid felicity. A doctrine, which need only appear, methinks, to be received with avidity, such are its attractions and dignity, such power has it to win the hearts of men : but excellent as it was, prejudices, aided by passions, strove to crush it in its birth, and at last cost the life of its divine author.

Instructed in the motives which actuated his enemies, he might have withdrawn himself from
their

their cruel pursuits; but this conduct, of which self-love would have availed itself, would have proved fatal to the establishment of the Christian Religion. Either he must brave the danger in supporting what he had advanced; and the disinterestedness which he showed imparted a new eclat to truth; or he must in some manner recede, which would have been an irreparable injury to a doctrine so salutary. It would have been suspected of imposture; and error would have triumphed over truth, which would never have found zealous disciples from the moment they would have seen their chief intimidated by menaces. Touched therefore with the fatal state to which depravity had reduced the world, convinced that by sacrificing himself he gave the last blow to sin, he saw the necessity of such a sacrifice, and took the generous resolution of shedding his own blood, rather than put any obstacle to the salvation of man.

With this view he assembles his disciples in order to prepare them for this event, and seeing them overwhelmed in profound grief, he addresses to them the most tender and consolatory discourse. Sometimes he explains to them the reasons of his undertaking, and the advantageous consequences it was going to produce. He had said to them a little before, predicting the manner of his death, "If I be lifted up above the earth, I will draw all men after me." He also makes them look upon his own death as a
sure

sure means of vanquishing the world. Sometimes he exhorts them to patience, and not to suffer themselves to be shaken by persecution. Sometimes he recommends to them the important duty of benevolence, repeats it, and enforces it by his own example. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Greater love can no one have than to lay down his life for his friend. And in order to preserve the memory of this signal benefit, amidst all these discourses he establishes the ceremony of the Eucharist.

The circumstance of the time was favourable. It was then the day of the Passover, the grand festival of the Jews. Jesus Christ celebrated it with his disciples, with the design of making it serve to another usage. As they were yet at supper, he took bread, and agreeably to the custom of the Jews, observed, especially in the Paschal solemnity, he gave thanks to the Deity that he had given men bread for their nourishment; after which he parted it into several morsels, which he distributed to the apostles, saying to them, *Take and eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me.*

As if he had said, It is necessary that I should be sacrificed in order to accomplish the work with which I am charged; it is a payment which I owe to God, who hath entrusted me with the salvation of the world: the interests

terests of truth require a victim—lo here it is—it is my body. This news afflicts you, but it ought to be to yourselves an example of courage and firmness. And in order to represent to you my body which is going to be broken, eat of this bread which I have cut into morsels for you. I now do not say to you; This is the bread of affliction which your Fathers eat in Egypt; I say to you, “This is my body which is broken for you.” This ceremony is no longer to celebrate the departure out of Egypt, but affectionately to perpetuate the idea of your Saviour: “At all times, therefore, that you shall be together, do this in remembrance of me.”

He afterwards took a cup full of wine, which he presented to his disciples, with a command to them all to drink of it. “For, says he, this is my blood, the blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many, to obtain the remission of their sins.” They seldom made a solemn treaty but they slew a victim, in order to render it in some measure more sacred, and thereby confirm it the more. Thus Moses did, and made himself a sprinkling of blood upon the Israelites; “This is the blood of the Covenant, said he, which the Lord makes with you.” In like manner, the blood, which Jesus Christ shed, established the truth of his gospel, serves as a foundation to the New Covenant; and this effusion of his blood is figuratively represented

presented to us by the wine in the Eucharist. Wherefore *drink you all of it*, if you have any regard for the sacrifice which I offer to God, and to truth; for this wine is the symbol of my blood which I am going to shed in favour of men, to the end that being confirmed in the profession of my doctrine, they may obtain the pardon of their sins.

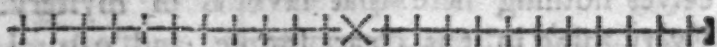
Such is the origin of the Eucharist, such the end which its Author assigns to it. One perceives nothing here that favours of mystery. Every thing in it is clear, simple, and natural. If we consider the air of the assistants, one observes in them no surprize, except the grief which they witness at seeing themselves shortly to be separated from their master; and to search for the marvellous under a pretended veil, is certainly to want to be more subtle than they. Here is a person who takes leave of his friends, who eats with them for the last time, who gives them a token that they may remember him.

Besides, it appears from all the circumstances that this ceremony is an imitation of the Passover, except that it represents another event. The Passover recalled to the mind of the Jews the miraculous deliverance from the Egyptian captivity. "When your children, says Moses, shall ask you what means this ceremony, you shall tell them, that it is the Passover of the Lord, when he smote Egypt." It is the same with regard to the Eucharist. It exhibits to

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Christians the death of Christ, who delivered them from spiritual Egypt: it preserves the memory of this grand event, and transmits it from age to age. If you here consult the infallible Teacher, he will answer you, that you should do this in remembrance of him. If you address yourselves to the disciples, St. Paul informs you, that "every time that you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do shew forth the Lord's death till he come."



COPY of a LETTER

Written to

WILLIAM BURNET, Esq. Governor of NEW-YORK.

YOU have occasioned me, my dear friend, to meditate with great pleasure on the Prophecies. I am not of the number of those you mention who totally disregard them. I have often been witness to the happy effects they have produced with regard to sensible persons, who, though once surrounded with all the felicities of their native soil, have in the indigence of a foreign refuge preserved great chearfulness of soul. They acknowledged that they lived on the prophecies, so powerfully were they supported by the soothing hope of a speedy re-establishment. Nor did this hope deceive them:

them: it blessed them with a tenor of happier days than they could have derived from riches, which, separate from mental satisfaction, are in themselves nothing but illusion and vanity. I agree with you, that prophecies are the *unknown quantities of a problem, and the events known quantities*: that the result which arises from several relations of one to the other is very clear, and that such in particular is the result of your calculation. You will also own to me in your turn, that prophecy is of the nature of those determinate problems, which admit but of one solution; and that it only remains to shew that your solution is the only one. It is enough to have found in history a train of facts which can fill up the conditions of prophecy; one must explicitly exclude every other sequel of facts, as there is but one only circumference of a circle that can pass through three given points. I am going to make an experiment upon one course of history which is better known to you than myself; and if it will admit of it, I will make it pass through the predicted circumstances, in order that you may examine it. Abstracted from this, the interpretation of prophecy is as doubtful as if one flattered one's self to have guessed two whole numbers, the difference of whose squares must be 48, because 1 and 7 have this property. I follow, my dear friend, your method of explaining scripture by itself, which exactly corresponds to my ideas and judgment.

ment. I will also suppose with you, what is certainly true, that the three last chapters of Daniel contain one and the same vision; — the tenth is an introduction; — the eleventh an history; — the last a chronology. Now the eleventh chapter contains a regular detail of the successors of Alexander the Great in Egypt under the kings of the South, and in Syria under the name of the kings of the North, (this is their respective situation in regard to Judea,) till the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, whose person and actions are characterized from the twenty first verse; his abjectness, his flattery, his intrigues to mount the throne, his various expeditions into Egypt, the last rendered ineffectual by the Romans, his vexation on this account, his madness, which spent itself on the Jews, the pollution of the sanctuary, the cessation of the daily sacrifice, and in its place the abomination of desolation, which it is of the last importance to remark, as well as the other circumstances of this horrible persecution, related to the fortieth verse, where the angel recapitulates in a few words the actions of Antiochus, and his unhappy end. Afterwards he continues the same subject in the following chapter. Verse 1. “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people;” that is, in the time of this persecution of Antiochus, which in effect *had never its equal*. Then in the second and third

third verses he predicts shame and disgrace to apostasy, and glory to that persevering courage which fixed the crown in the Asmonean family. At last, in the seventh verse, he informs the prophet that this persecution would continue, a time, times, and half a time, that is, three years and a half, which is exactly its duration from the arrival of Apollonius, the executioner of Antiochus's madness, to the purification of the sanctuary, as Josephus expressly calculates it in two places, and it is also manifest from the books of the Maccabees. The angel gives a fuller explication at the eleventh verse: "From the time, says he, the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate be set up; there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days;" which just make these three years and a half. Observe, I beseech you, with regard to this cessation of the sacrifice and this abomination, that he employs the same terms, and understands the same thing of which he had already spoken at the thirty first verse of the preceding chapter, which undoubtedly respects only the persecution of Antiochus, and which consequently ought not to be explained but in the same manner in the twelfth chapter. According to your hypothesis, my dear friend, these 1290 days intend so many years; and I believe this may be true: but you have not proved that scheme to be erroneous which understands them

of natural days. At least, it is acknowledged on both sides, that *a time, two times, and half a time*, are a year, two years, and half a year; and it is a thing yet unheard of in the style of the sacred penmen, that a *time* or year should be taken for 360 years. It should seem, therefore, that when the angel makes three years and a half equal to 1290 days, he understands 1290 natural days. And as to what you allege from chapter x. 13, that twenty-one *days* can be no other than as many years, you will pardon me if I dissent from your opinion. These twenty-one days plainly relate to the twenty-one days which are spoken of in the second verse. It is there said, that the prophet fasted twenty-one days, and that in the twenty-fourth day of the first month he had the vision in question, in which the angel tells him, that from the first day of his fast his prayer had been heard; but that the prince of the kingdom of Persia, adds he in the 13th verse, had resisted him twenty-one days, that is, during all the time of his fast, which cannot be explained but of twenty-one natural days. The book of Esdras furnishes us, in my opinion, with the explication of this verse, which is not a little difficult. We read there, that the Samaritans presented requests to the court of Persia, during even the life of Cyrus, to oppose the building of the temple of Jerusalem. Now this vision of Daniel happened in the third year of Cyrus, that is, two
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or three years after the return of the Jews, who then availed themselves of this prince's edict to rebuild their temple, which their neighbours opposed. It should then be pretty clear, that in the third year of Cyrus this affair was brought to court, and debated twenty-one days in council, where the good party prevailed. So that by the prince of the kingdom of Persia, who was then so violent against the Jews, one might understand the first minister gained over by the Samaritans, or influenced by some other motive. Moreover, to return to the last chapter of Daniel, when after having said that the daily sacrifice should be interrupted during 1290 days, he adds in the twelfth verse, "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days," he does not lengthen the first term of 45 days but in order to mark the death of Antiochus, which happened a little after the re-establishment of divine service; or indeed he marks the time employed in fortifying the temple and securing it from insults, as is said 1 Mac. iv. 60. With regard to the passage, chap. viii. 14. in which the interruption of the daily sacrifice is to continue two thousand three hundred mornings and evenings, there is, I own, a great difficulty, which perhaps would never have existed had it not been for the bad punctuation of the Masorites. For if one reads without points the word which is translated, *two thousand*, in the dual number,

which does not differ from the same word in the dual but in one or two little points added by the Masorites, one may as well translate it *a thousand three hundred evenings and mornings*, as Montanus has done, that is, 1300 days, a round number for 1290. But let this be as it will, my very dear friend, you are far from asserting that you have entirely removed this difficulty, since you refer the solution of it to future ages. When one employs this expedient, one is better disposed to make all candid allowances to others. Had I not perfectly known your character in this regard, I would not have presumed to propose my scruples. I am, my dear friend,

Your devoted humble servant,

M. ABAUZIT.



AN

EXPLICATION

OF THE

Prophecy contained in the eleventh Chapter of DANIEL by the Event.

Sequel of the preceding Vision. Chapter eleventh of DANIEL. Verse 1.

IN the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood to confirm and to strengthen him."

It

It is the angel who continues his discourse to the prophet. He had just said that he had associated himself with Michael the archangel, the protector of God's people, to fight the prince of Persia. This was undoubtedly some bad angel who hindered the return of the captive Jews into their country. He therefore says here, that from the reign of Darius the Mede he was employed in strengthening the party of the archangel.

2. "And now I will shew you the truth. Behold there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Javan."

Cyrus reigned in Persia at the time of this prophecy, chap. x. 1. These three kings therefore are Cambyfes, the son of Cyrus; Smerdis and Darius, the sons of Hyftaspes; the fourth is Xerxes, famous for his riches and his power. His fleet covered all the sea. It consisted of 1200 men of war and 3000 ships of burden. His land forces were so numerous that they exhausted the fountains and rivers. Historians give him two millions of armed men. With this immense retinue he came against the Greeks. "He shall stir up all against the kingdom of Javan." The scripture always characterizes the Greeks under this appellation.

We

We may read Ion—Ionia was the ancient name of Greece.

3. “But a mighty king shall stand up, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his own will.”

The angel passes suddenly to Alexander the Great, though after Xerxes there were eight kings in Persia; but they were much weaker than him, and did not perform such illustrious deeds as made them much celebrated. Besides, the transition is very natural. As if the angel had said, This fourth king shall make war upon the Greeks, shall ravage their country, and burn their most beautiful cities; but a king of that nation shall one day fully revenge their calamities, by for ever destroying the monarchy of the Persians. In chap. vii. 6. he is compared to a Leopard with wings, and to a *Ram*, which coming from the west, namely, from Macedonia, which lies west of Persia, *ran without touching the earth*: chap. viii. 5. Two striking emblems which mark the *rapidity* of his conquests. In reality he appeared rather to fly than to march. In the space of six years he subdued the empire of the Persians, which was of an immense extent, penetrated into the interior parts of Africa, into Tartary, and a considerable way into the Indies. “He shall rule with great dominion,” says the angel. Obstacles the most invincible were not capable of stopping

stopping his career. "He will do according to his will."

4. "And when he shall be in his strength, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven: it shall not pass to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up, and shall be given to others besides these."

Having attained the highest summit of grandeur, and seeking nothing but a new world to conquer, Alexander suddenly died in the flower of his age, and his empire ended with his life: After it was therefore in its full strength, his empire shall be broken, meaning by his death. His generals divided his respective states amongst them, left nothing to Aridæus, the king's brother, but an empty title, which this prince, incapable of ruling, did not preserve long: every one affected independence, and soon usurped the diadem.

Four chiefs prevailed: Ptolemy established himself in Egypt, in the South; and Antigonus in Asia Minor, North.

Seleucus seized the eastern provinces; and Cassander, Macedonia, towards the West, after he had freed himself of the two young princes, Alexander and Hercules, the children of Alexander the Great by Roxana and Barsine. "His empire then shall be divided towards the four quarters of heaven, and shall not pass to his posterity."

posterity. It shall even be given to others besides these:" besides these four more powerful kingdoms, there were formed several other little states out of the ruins of this great monarchy.

5. "And the king of the South shall be strong, but another of his generals shall be strong above him, and his dominion shall be a great dominion."

"The king of the South shall be strong:" this is Ptolemy the first, king of Egypt, which is thus called because it is south of Judea. He added to this kingdom Arabia, Coelosyria, Judea, the isle of Cyprus, and several other countries. Appianus Alexandrinus gives us a detail of the riches and prodigious armaments which this prince left to his son Philadelphus. "But another of his generals, meaning Alexander's, shall be still more powerful," namely, Seleucus king of Syria. He became master of Babylon and of the provinces of the east: the victories which he obtained over Antigonus and Lysimachus, gained him Syria, Asia Minor, Thrace, &c. "He was, says Arrian*, the most powerful of all Alexander's successors, and whose states had the greatest extent: thus the angel adds, "His dominion shall be a wide dominion." His descendants will soon appear under the title of kings of the North, because Syria is to the north of Judea. No mention will be further made but of them

* De rebus Alexandri, lib. vii.

and of the kings of Egypt, because the calamities which afterwards happened to the Jewish nation, came upon it solely from these princes.

6. "And at the end of a certain number of years, they shall make an alliance together; for the daughter of the king of the South shall come to espouse the king of the North, to the end that their affairs may be prosperous; but she shall not maintain him by a strong arm, and his race shall not subsist*; she herself shall be given up, together with those who brought her, and he that was born of her, and who was her support in these times."

At the end of a certain number of years, they shall make an alliance together. It is of Ptolemy Philadelphus, the second king of Egypt, and of Antiochus the Divine, the third king of Syria, that the angel speaks. He hath omitted Antiochus Soter, the second king of Syria, whose life was rather obscure: he hastens to the first wars between the kings of Syria and Egypt, a subject which greatly interested the people of God, for the reason we shall afterwards shew. Philadelphus and Antiochus the Divine had great quarrels with one another; at last they were reconciled, about sixty years after the death of Alexander. The king of Egypt gave Berenice his daughter in marriage to the

* Thus the Vulgate renders it. The text says, "His arm itself shall not subsist," meaning the son, who was the support of his mother, as the conclusion of the verse says.

king of Syria, who immediately divorced Laodicea his first wife: "The daughter of the king of the South, says the angel, shall come to espouse the king of the North, to the end that things may be more prosperous;" that is, to render the peace more durable.

Laodicea was afterwards recalled to court, and Berenice lost her authority; "She shall not maintain herself by a strong arm." Her rival fearing a second unfaithfulness on the part of Antiochus, caused him to be poisoned, put her son * Seleucus Callinicus upon the throne, and took away the life of Berenice's son: "Her race, or, her arm, shall not subsist."

The mother, and those who were willing to defend her, a very little while after experienced the same fate. "She herself shall be given up." Nothing is clearer than the words of the angel; they have rather the air of an history than of a prophecy.

7. "But there shall spring forth a shoot from the same branch from which she was: he shall come with an army, shall enter into the provinces of the king of the North; shall there make great ravages, and prevail."

"But there shall spring forth a shoot from the same branch." This shoot is Ptolemy Evergetes, or the Beneficent, the son of Philadel-

* Justin, lib. xxvii, cap. 1. Appian.

phus and brother of Berenice. He advanced at the head of a powerful army, to revenge the death of his sister, caused Laodicea to be put to death, took the states of Seleucus Callinicus, and pushed his conquests as far as Babylon, says Appian, and even to the Indies, if one may credit Polyænus and an ancient inscription*.

8. "He shall carry into Egypt their gods captive, their molten images, their precious vessels of silver and gold; and during some years he shall be stronger than the king of the North."

"He shall carry into Egypt their gods captive," that is, as the angel immediately adds, their statues, which are ordinarily taken for the divinities themselves. Ptolemy carried home an infinite number of statues and sacred utensils, even those which Cambyfes had taken away from the Egyptians and carried into Persia almost 300 years before. This superstitious people were so delighted with their king for this, that they give him the surname of Benefactor. This we learn from the inscription already cited, and from the histories which St. Jerom had read.

9. "After the king of the South shall have over-run the states of his enemy, he shall return into his own country."

* Published by Father Montfaucon. in his *Cosmas*.

"After

“After the king of the South shall have over-run the states of his enemy, continues the angel, he shall return to his own country.” Evergetes learning that his subjects had revolted, was obliged, says Justin, to return directly into Egypt. As he passed through Jerusalem, he thanked God for his victories, and made rich presents in the temple.

10. “But the sons of the king of the North shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a great multitude of forces. One of them shall suddenly come as an overflowing water. He shall return a second time to attack the frontiers of Egypt.”

Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great, sons of Callinicus king of Syria, exasperated at the losses their father had sustained, endeavoured to repair them. “The children of the North shall be stirred up,” says the angel. Ceraunus the eldest dying, Antiochus took his place, and threw himself into Coelosyria, of which he easily made himself master by the intelligences he had received. “One of them (Antiochus) shall suddenly come as an overflowing water.” They talked of peace, but nothing was concluded. The king of Syria took the field again, and posted himself before Raphia, a strong place on the confines of Egypt. Consult on this the historian Polybius, lib. v.

11. “And the king of the South shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight

fight with the king of the North : " he shall assemble a great multitude, but the army which had attacked him shall be given into his hand."

Ptolemy Philopator, son of Euergetes and king of Egypt, had made hitherto no movement : he was a soft effeminate prince, devoted to pleasure. Irritated at last, he collected all his forces, advanced to give battle to Antiochus, and defeated him near Raphia ; " the army which had attacked him shall be given into his hand." Polybius, who describes this battle, observes, that this same year, and in the same season of it, Annibal obtained the famous battle of the Thrasimene lake, in which the consul Flaminius and 15000 men lay dead on the place.

12. " The defeat of such an immense number of his enemies shall swell his heart ; but though he shall have cast down many ten thousands, he shall not be strengthened by it."

Philopator retook Coelosyria and Palestine : inflated with his victory, he wanted to enter into God's sanctuary. The Jews opposed him, and he afterwards persecuted them cruelly, as is recorded in the second book of the Macchabees. " The defeat of his enemies shall swell his heart, he shall not however be strengthened by it ;" that is, he could not entirely vanquish Antiochus.

13. " For the king of the North shall again collect greater forces than the former, and shall

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certainly come after certain years, with a great army, and with grand preparations."

Instead of making use of his victory and pursuing his enemy, content with having recovered his lost states, Philopator gave peace to the king of Syria, who had not desired it but only in order the better to renew the war. "For the king of the North, continues the angel, shall re-assemble a multitude greater than the former, &c."

14. "And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the South, also the factions of thy people shall rise, that the vision may be accomplished, but they shall fall."

Antiochus only sought a favourable opportunity of declaring against Egypt, and he found it. Philopator dies, and leaves a son only five years of age, Ptolemy Epiphanes. To oppress this young prince with more ease, the king of Syria makes an alliance with Philip king of Macedonia: "Many, says the angel, shall rise up against the king of the South." Antiochus advances and seizes Palestine: he allows the Jews full permission of living according to their laws. Philopator had just persecuted them: a great number had abjured their religion. The people having obtained some respite, inflicted upon these apostates the punishments with which the law of God threatens such. This we learn from the third book of the Macchabees, chap. vii. 8, 13. Under the government of Antiochus
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the Great they could exercise discipline with greater freedom. "The children of the apostates of thy people, says the angel to the prophet, shall be cut off, that the prophecy may be fulfilled;" that is, in order that the law in the thirteenth chapter of Dueteronomy, which is also repeated by the prophets against the deserters of the true worship, may be executed. The interpreters of scripture are here a little embarrassed, without excepting Grotius himself. The sense which he gives this passage does not find its confirmation in history: he supposes a fact of which there is no mention. Others render it in this manner; "The children of apostates shall rise up to accomplish a prophecy;" and apply this to Onias the priest, who built in Egypt a temple after the model of that in Jerusalem, to accomplish, he said, that prophecy of Isaiah, chap. xix. 19. "There shall be an altar to the altar in the midst of Egypt." But the order of time, which the angel ever regularly follows, militates against this explanation. Josephus, who relates this transaction, does not place it till after the persecution of Antiochus the Illustrious, forty years after the league of Antiochus the Great and of Philip against Ptolemy Epiphanes.

15. "So the king of the North shall come and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities. The arms of the South shall not with-

stand, neither his chosen troops: they shall be too weak to make head against him."

16. "But he that cometh against him shall do whatever he pleases, and none shall be able to stand before him. He shall establish his dominion in the glorious land, which by his troops shall be consumed."

Antiochus made himself master of all the strong places in Coelosyria; he cut in pieces, near the sources of Jordan, the army of the Egyptians, who had just retaken Judea: "their chosen troops, says the angel, shall be too weak to withstand him." "By this victory he secured to himself, and to his descendants, says Polybius, the possession of those countries:" "he shall establish his dominion in the glorious land, which by his troops shall be consumed:" the kingdom of Judea is thus called by way of distinction. During the wars of Antiochus the Great with the kings of Egypt, whether he were victorious or vanquished, Judea was always an equal sufferer; these are the words of Josephus. Situated between Egypt and Syria, it became the theatre of all the wars: "by their troops it shall be consumed."

17. "He shall also pursue the design of making himself master of all the dominions of the king of the South, and he shall give him the daughter of one of his wives, hoping to corrupt her, but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him."

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The Syrian monarch would not have stopped here, he meant to invade Egypt itself. "He shall pursue the design of seizing the whole kingdom of the South: but the Romans being appointed guardians of Ptolemy, they prevented his ruin by checking the farther progress of Antiochus. Jealous of his too great power, they sought an opportunity of humbling him, and moved by the complaints of various free states, which this ambitious prince menaced, dispatched an ambassador to him: vexed at seeing the obstacles which they put in the way of his designs, animated by the counsels of Annibal, who sought nothing but the detriment of the Roman republic, he prepared very vigorously for the war. That he might not have so many enemies at once upon his hands, he pretended to caress the young king of Egypt, says Appian*, and gave him his daughter Cleopatra, with Coelosyria for her portion. This is what the angel predicts: "He shall put on an air of kindness with him, and give him his daughter in marriage; but, adds he, with a design of ruining him." Antiochus was not sincere in this alliance. He flattered himself that his daughter would keep up a correspondence with him, "but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him." This princess preferred the interests

* De Bellis Syriacis, p. 88.

of her husband to those of her father: she herself, in concert with Ptolemy, sent to the Roman senate, to offer them assistance against the king of Assyria, as Livy informs us in the 37th book of his history.

18. "After this he shall turn his face against the isles, and shall take many: but a prince shall cause this reproach to cease; and the disgrace with which the king covered others, shall fall back upon himself."

It was Annibal's advice to carry the war into Italy. Antiochus chose rather to attack Greece, "He shall turn his face against the isles." Thus the scripture calls Greece, whether on account of the great number of islands with which it is surrounded, or whether because it is almost every where environed by the sea. Besides Asiatic Greece, which is only a maritime country, the king of Syria made himself master of the Peninsula of Thrace, the islands of Euboea, Delos, &c. "He shall take many of them." After some actions, in which he had always the disadvantage, he wanted to amuse and trick the consul Scipio, surnamed Asiaticus, and brother of Africanus; "but this prince shall cause this reproach to cease;" that is, he will revenge the outrages committed by Antiochus on the Roman people and their allies. Scipio at last gave him a total defeat in Caria, and obliged him to accept a peace in every respect dishonourabl

nourable. And this prince, who meant to impose tribute on free nations, was constrained himself to pay it to the Romans; "Thus the shame with which he covered others, fell upon himself," as the angel says. Polybius* records the conditions of this treaty; amongst several others, this was one, that Antiochus should not attack the *inhabitants of the islands*; that he should cede all the countries situated on this side mount Taurus; and that, beside the tribute, he should defray the expences of the war.

19. "Then he shall turn his face towards the frontiers of his own kingdom, but he shall fall into the snare and perish, and shall not be found among the living."

Traversing his kingdom, he arrived at Elymaida, which bounded it on the east: "He retired, says the angel, towards the frontiers of his kingdom." But whether that war had exhausted his money, or whether he was tempted by avarice, he wanted to pillage the temple of Belus, which contained immense riches. The people of the country forming an ambush, slew him with all his troops. "He shall fall into the snare, there he shall perish, and shall not be found among the living." Such was the end of Antiochus the Great, as Strabo,

* See Polybii Excerpt. cap. 25, 35.

Diodorus, and Justin * relate, which is entirely conformable to the prophecy.

20. "Then shall stand up in his place a raiser of taxes, to support the royal dignity; but in a little time he shall be overwhelmed, but not in open rebellion, nor in battle,"

Seleucus Philopator succeeded his father Antiochus. Towards the end of his reign he dispatched to Jerusalem "Heliodorus, superintendant of his finances, to seize the treasures of the temple." 2 Macchab. chap. iii. 7. "He shall send the tax-gatherer to support the royal dignity;" that is, to relieve the necessities of the state, which the ambition of his father had impoverished. "But in a little time he shall be destroyed, not openly, nor in battle;" meaning, secretly, and by those whom he least distrusted. "He was treacherously slain, says Appian†, by this same Heliodorus, who was his confidant and his prime minister."

21. "To him shall succeed a contemptible prince, to whom they will not at first give the honour of king: he shall come in with little disturbance, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries."

This is Antiochus Epiphanes, which signifies the Illustrious, a prince styled here *contemptible*,

* Strabo lib. xxvi. Diod. p. 292. Excerpt. Valesii, Justin, lib. xxxii.

† Appian de Bellis Syriacis, p. 116.

on account of his manners, which were abject and unworthy of his rank *. He walked the streets attended only by a single servant; stopped with the first persons he met, strangers or people of the lowest condition, took them to the tavern or to the public baths. The courtiers expressed the last astonishment at the sight of this behaviour; but it was far from being displeasing to the people whose favour he courted. He was lately come from Rome, where] he had been for some time in the character of an hostage, and they had sent thither in his room Demetrius, the son of his brother Seleucus Philopator. He was not directly acknowledged as sovereign; he was not the presumptive heir of the crown, it belonged of right to his nephew Demetrius: "They gave him not *at first* the honour of king," says the angel. Studying by what expedient he might usurp it, he endeavoured to gain the suffrages of the multitude, assumed a civil and friendly air, was accessible to every body, affected a sweetness of manners, and under the appearance of dissembled goodness at last obtained the kingdom of Syria: "He shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries."

22. "The armies which spread themselves like the torrents, shall be scattered before him,

* Diod. Sic. p. 305. Excerpt. Valesii. Athenæi lib. v. cap. 4. & lib. v. cap. 12.

and be destroyed. Afterwards he shall be the author of an alliance."

The Egyptians demanded of Antiochus Epiphanes the restitution of Coelosyria; and, upon his refusal, put a great army in motion. He conquered them between Pelusium and mount Cassius: this is what St. Jerom* had read in Porphyry, whose history is lost: "The armies that diffused themselves like the torrents shall be scattered before him." It is in the original, "The arms which made an inundation shall flow away before him." The angel seems to allude to the arms of the Nile, which constituted the strength and wealth of Egypt; and he had already spoken, in the fifteenth verse, of the army of the South, which we have translated the forces of the South, meaning, of Egypt.

Ptolemy Philometor, the son of Ptolemy Epiphanes and of Cleopatra the daughter of Antiochus the Great, and consequently nephew of Antiochus Epiphanes, was then very young, and left to his ministers the reins of government. The king of Syria, as a near relation, made pretensions to the guardianship of the young king of Egypt; he did not make peace, but with this stipulation: "He shall be the author of an alliance."

* St. Jerom on Daniel xi.

23. "But notwithstanding the league made with him, he shall use treachery, and he shall rise and fortify himself with a few troops."

Epiphanes had only demanded the regency of the kingdom of Egypt, to seize upon it with the greater facility: "notwithstanding the league made with him, he shall use treachery." He pretended to be the good friend of Philometor, says Porphyry* at the place cited by St. Jerom; but he had nothing in view but his own interests: he thought to create to himself a powerful party, and to establish himself in the territories of his pupil: "he shall rise and fortify himself with a few troops." Undoubtedly he only came with a few people, for otherwise he would have been suspected by the Egyptians.

24. "He shall enter peaceably in the most fertile places of the provinces: and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers fathers: he shall scatter among them the booty and riches: he shall form designs for a certain time against the strongest cities."

"He shall enter peaceably into the most fertile countries." Egypt was a land extremely fruitful, and the king of Syria gained it without opposition. "He shall do then what his fathers never did:" his predecessors never had been able to render themselves masters of it.

* St. Jerom on Daniel xi.

It is true, Epiphanes did not hold it but as tutor to the young prince, but he will soon occupy it in the quality of conqueror. "He will distribute among them, continues the angel, the booty and wealth of his fathers," in order to make creatures and partisans. The author of the first book of Macchabees informs us, chapter iii. 30, that this prince made extraordinary liberalities, and that he was more magnificent than any of his predecessors; and this he practised to gain his end, which was to appropriate to himself Egypt. "He will form designs against the strongest cities." This verse and the two preceding are understood so obviously of Egypt and of the enterprizes which Antiochus formed against it, that I cannot see what could induce Grotius, and the other interpreters, to search for other explications.

25. "Then he shall stir up his power and his courage to attack the king of the South, with a great army. The king of the South shall advance to give battle with a very great and mighty army, but he shall not stand, for they shall forecast devices against him."

Antiochus afterwards learnt that Philometor had removed him from the government of affairs, consult 2 Macchab. chap. iv. 21. and he plainly showed that he had thought of nothing but his own sordid interests. Not content with his kingdom of Syria he wanted also to reign in Egypt; and he entered it with an immense
army,

army, 1 Maccab. chap. 1, 17, 18. Therefore it is that the angel says, "He shall stir up his power and his courage to attack the king of the South." It is said expressly in the second book of Macchabees, chap. v. 1. that this was the second expedition of Antiochus against Egypt. There had then been an expedition before this, which is an additional proof that the 22, 23, 24 verses ought to be explained of the first enterprize which the king of Syria made against Egypt. "The king of the South, continues the angel, shall advance with a very great and mighty army, but he shall not stand:" in effect, they were vanquished and put to flight by Antiochus*.

26. "Those who live at his table shall ruin him; his army shall be overwhelmed, and a great number of them shall be slain."

Those who live at his table — meaning his confidants, shall betray him — a circumstance omitted by the historians, at which one ought not to express surprize, as what they record of the kings of Syria and Egypt is very succinct and imperfect. It were to be wished we had the writings of Sutorius and Porphyry.

27. "And both these kings hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one

* 1 Macchab. chap. i. 19, and the authors above-mentioned,

table;

table; but it shall not prosper, for the time will not be come."

The loss of the battle involved in it the loss of Egypt, and Philometor saw himself stripped of his dominion*. The inhabitants of Alexandria took his crown from him and placed it on the head of his brother Ptolemy Physcon. Philometor, reduced to the last distress, threw himself into the arms of Antiochus, who openly proclaimed himself his protector, and promised to re-establish him on the throne. But this was only a pretended reconciliation: "The heart of these kings shall be set on doing mischief." "One of them, says Livy †, sought only a specious pretext to complete the conquest of Egypt, by the reduction of Alexandria. The other was no stranger to Antiochus, and did not confide much in his promises. Unable to do otherwise, he received and treated him magnificently in Memphis, where these two princes mutually made protestations of amity. But there was little sincerity in their conversation, each only studied to deceive the other." Says the angel, "They shall speak lies at one table; but, adds he, they shall not succeed in their designs, because the time shall not yet be come:" that is, this fraud was of no avail.

* Diodorus Excerpt. Eusebii, p. 320. Polyb. Legat. 80, 81, 82.

† Livii, lib. 44, 45.

The king of Syria broke up the siege of Alexandria*, and Philometor was not re-established: the glory of the war was *reserved* for the Romans, "but the time was not yet come."

28. "Then he shall return into his land with great riches; his heart shall be against the holy covenant, he shall act against it, after which he shall return into his own land."

Epiphanes, having left Philometor at Memphis, returned with his troops into Syria†, after having placed a strong garrison in convenient places—for he hoped that the two brothers would soon fall by one another's hands. "He shall return into his own land with great riches, and loaded with the spoils of Egypt," 1 Macchab. chap. i. 20.

Neither this author, or Livy, tell us the occasion of this retreat. It was the news of an insurrection in Judea, as is recorded in 2 Maccab. chap. v. 1, 5, 11, where there is mention of the second war of Antiochus against Egypt. It is of importance to remark this, in order not to confound, as father Petavius has done, this second expedition with the third, which was rendered ineffectual by the Romans. Dreading the consequences of this revolt, this prince in great rage departs from Egypt, takes Jerusalem by assault, puts 80,000 persons to death,

* Livii, lib. xlv.

† Id. Ibid.

and carries to Antioch the treasures of the temple. "His heart, says the angel, shall be against the holy covenant; he shall make a great carnage, after which he shall return into his own land," that is, into Syria. Consult 1 Macchab. chap. i. 20, 25. The history itself is not clearer than the prophecy.

29. "At the time appointed he shall return anew, and advance towards the South, but this last expedition shall not be like the preceding."

Philometor seeing the danger which threatened him from the king of Syria, entered into a composition with his brother Physcon, called also Evergetes II. Epiphanes, instead of being pleased with this reconciliation, made greater preparations than before against the two Ptolemies, who, conscious of their inability to resist him, implored the aid of the Roman senate. "At the time appointed he shall return anew against the South." We shall soon see the bad success of his enterprize: "This last expedition shall not be like the preceding."

30. "For ships shall come from Chittim against him, therefore he shall be intimidated and return: he shall discharge his choler against the holy covenant, he shall occasion great evils to it, and to continue to favour those who have forsaken it."

"For the vessels shall come from the region of Chittim against him." He means the Roman squadron, which conducted Popilius Lænas, who

who was deputed by the republic to Antiochus to declare war against this prince, if he did not immediately quit Egypt. The Romans had just attacked Macedonia, and Popilius, in order to protect the convoy, sailed through the adjacent seas along with the vessels*. The king of Syria had imagined that this war would occupy them for a long time: the sequel showed his hopes to be ill founded: "ships shall come from Chittim," that is, from Macedonia, which hath this appellation in scripture. Thus Alexander the Great, Philip, and Perseus, kings of Macedonia, are called kings of Chittim, 1 Maccab. chap. i. 1. chap. viii. 5. After the defeat of Perseus†, Popilius lands in Egypt, Epiphanes advances to meet him, salutes him, and stretches out his hand to him. The senator, a blunt man, paying no regard to his complaisance, directly puts the papers into his hands, which signified the occasion of his coming. The king desires time to deliberate with his ministers. The Roman with his wand draws a circle round him in the sand, and tells him he must give him an explicit answer, before he set a foot out of that space. Astonished at this haughty conduct, Antiochus promises to leave his nephew in peace: "He shall be inti-

* Livy, lib. xlv.

† Polybii Legat. 92. Livy, lib. xlv. Patereulus, lib. i. cap. 10. Justin, lib. xxxiv. cap. 3.

midated, says the angel, and return." Enraged at seeing his designs miscarry, not knowing on whom to fasten, he finds the Jews in his way, and persecutes them with the most horrible cruelty: "he shall discharge the choler against the holy covenant, he shall occasion great evils to it, and continue to favour those who have forsaken it," meaning Menelaus and such like men, who had abjured the true religion to obtain the high posts. Grotius adds to them Jason; but this Jason had excited the sedition, of which we have already spoken on the 28th verse, and if he had not fled before, Antiochus would have put him to a cruel death, far from granting him any favours.

31. "And powerful men shall appear on his part, who shall pollute the sanctuary of God, shall cause the daily sacrifice to cease, and shall place in the temple the abomination that shall cause desolation."

This king sent 22000 men to Jerusalem, under the conduct of Apollonius, who exercised inexpressible outrages. "Great forces shall be with him." They converted the temple into a place of massacre, and perpetrated there a thousand enormities, recorded in the history of the Maccabees. "They shall pollute the sanctuary of God." Divine service was suspended, no more victims were offered, no more burnt offerings. "They shall cause the daily sacrifice to cease," that is, which the law pre-

scribed

scribed to be offered every day. These troops set upon the altar the abominable idol of Jupiter Olympius, and sacrificed to it swine and other unclean beasts. "They shall place in the temple the abomination." So many profanations shook the faithful with horror; not being able to endure the sight, they fled away into the deserts. "The city became the residence of strangers, it was a stranger to its own natural citizens, and its sanctuary was desolate, and became a solitude," says the author of the first book of Maccabees. "The abomination that shall cause desolation." Nothing is better circumstanced—methinks the angel recites events of which he might have been witness. Here is something still more precise and exact: "*from the time*, says he again*, that the daily sacrifice shall be done away, and the abomination of desolation shall be established, there shall pass a thousand two hundred and ninety days." This number of days† makes exactly three years and a half, which elapsed from the interdiction of the sacrifice to its re-establishment by Judas Maccabeus, or the death of Antiochus, which was nearly co-incident with it. This is what the interpreters have already remarked, and which one might even demonstrate by astronomical calculation.

* Daniel, chap. xii. 11.

† Josephus De Bello Jud. lib. i. cap. 1.

32. "He will oblige the prevaricators of the covenant, to use disguise," that is, to betray their own consciences, in conniving at idolatry. "But those who know their God shall adhere to him and do what he commands. "The greatest part obeyed the king, whether it were voluntarily or through fear, says Josephus; but his menaces could not hinder those who had virtue and generosity of soul, from observing the laws of their fathers." Such were the Maccabees, such the Assideans, so much commended in 1 Maccab. chap. ii. 42. chap. vii. 17, and 2 Maccab. chap. xiv. 16.

33. "And they that understand among the people, shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword and by fire, by captivity and by pillage, which shall continue many days."

"They shall instruct many" by their exhortations and by their example, as Eleazar did. "They shall fall by the sword and by fire;" consult the seventh chapter of the second book of Maccabees, where you will see a detail of these punishments. "And by captivity and by pillage, which, shall last many days:" a great number were dragged into captivity, and though stayed in the country, were rifled or butchered by the soldiery, 2 Maccab. v. 13, 24. and 1 Maccab. i. 33, 36.

34. "Now when they shall have fallen, they shall receive a little help, for many shall secretly join themselves to them."

Mattathias.

Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus appeared with a handful of men to succour their oppressed country: and six thousand men joined them little by little, in a silent clandestine manner: they insinuated themselves privately into their party, which gradually and secretly enlarged itself; see 2 Maccab. chap. viii. 1—4.

35. “But amongst the understanding shall be some who shall fall, in order that the approved may be rendered pure and white, until the time that the end shall come, for it will not come but at the time appointed.”

“At the time appointed,” that is, after the three years and a half of persecution; see verse 31.

36. “And this king shall do according to his own will, and he shall exalt himself above every God, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of Gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished, for the time of it is exactly fixed.”

37. “Neither shall he have regard for the God of his fathers, nor for the entreaties of women, nor any God whatever, for he shall magnify himself above all.”

The Gods of his fathers are those of Syria, of which he was king. Every country had its particular Gods, whom the Romans called *Dii patrii*, the Gods of the country.

38. “Instead of him he shall honour the God of forces, the God whom his fathers knew not,

shall he honour with gold and silver, and with precious stones and other valuable things."

It seems that this God is Jupiter Olympius, particularly honoured at Olympia, a city of Peloponnesus, where the Olympic games were celebrated. Antiochus caused the statue of this God, who as a *stranger in Syria*, to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem.

39. "Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with this strange God, whom he shall acknowledge and encrease with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain."

In order to understand what follows to the end of the last chapter, it is proper to remark, that the angel resumes here the recital of the expedition of Antiochus Epiphanes against Egypt, which he had only very transiently mentioned in the preceding verses. He marched then against Egypt with a numerous army, verse 40, like a *tempest* which overthrows every thing, accompanied with horses and chariots; and having on the sea a large fleet, which came before Pelusium, where he defeated that of Egypt. This is mentioned in 1 Maccab. i. 17. and in Livy, lib. xlv. Consult also Josephus Antiq. lib. xii. cap. 6.

40. "At the time appointed the king of the South shall attack him, and the king of the North shall rise up against him like a whirlwind, with horses and chariots, and a great fleet:

fleet : he shall enter into his country, he shall overflow it and pass across it."

41. " He shall then enter into the glorious land, several provinces shall be overflowed, but these shall escape out of his hands, Edom, Moab, and the capital of the children of Ammon."

Antiochus, in traversing Judea, did not molest the Idumæans, the Moabites and the Ammonites ; whether it were that he might not divide his forces, or whether because these people acceded to his propositions, or even assisted him in tyrannizing over the Jews, as appears from I Maccab. chap. iv. 61. chap. v. 3, 4, 6. and from Josephus Antiquit. lib. xii. chap. 11.

42. " He shall stretch forth his hand also upon various countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

43. " He shall make himself master of the treasures of gold, and of silver, and of all the precious things of Egypt : and the Lybians and Æthiopians shall be at his steps.

44. " But tidings out of the East and out of the North shall trouble him : therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and sack every thing.

45. " He shall erect the tents of his camp between the seas in the glorious holy mountain ; yet he shall come to his end and none shall help him.

Chap. xii. 1. " And at that time shall Mi-

chael stand up, the great prince who is the protector of thy people ; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation to that time : but in that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

The angel who continues speaking to the prophet, informs, him in this last chapter, that the persecutions of the Jewish people, caused by Antiochus Epiphanes for three years and a half, shall be followed by a state of tranquility and felicity. Amidst so many calamities, and notwithstanding the appearance of certain ruin, God will contrive a method to deliver and save those who shall prove faithful to his laws, and " who shall be written in his book" an expression taken from kings who keep a register of their soldiers or of their friends, and who strike them off as they die or desert.

2. " And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall wake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Meaning, in the literal sense and without excluding the mystical, those of the Jews, who to avoid the persecution were, as it were, interred in the caverns, like men buried alive under ground: See Isaiah xli. 14. Ezek. xxxvii. 4. Matth. xxiv. 24. They shall be re-established and freed from oppression all their lives,

lives, whilst the deserters of the true God shall live in eternal ignominy.

3. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall be as the stars for ever and ever."

The wise and faithful, the Maccabees and others who were as the light of the nation, shall shine as the stars, and enjoy everlasting renown.

4. "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book even to the time of the end, at which many will run over it and acquire great knowledge from it."

The prophets sometimes sealed up their predictions, and did not publish them till after some time, especially when the events were distant.

Keep this prophecy till the time prescribed—or—close it, it will be unknown till the event: then they will break the seal, and the people know the signification of it.

5. "Then I Daniel looked, and behold two other persons, who stood, the one on this side the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river.

6. "And one said to the man cloathed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, When will the end of these things come?

7. "Then I heard the man cloathed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, when

when he held up his right hand, and his left hand unto heaven, and swear by him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

8. "I heard what he said, but I understood it not: then said I, O my Lord, how long shall it be to these things?"

9. "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel, these things shall be closed up and sealed till the time appointed.

10. "Many shall be purified and made white by the trial: but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand these things, but the wise shall understand them."

That is, those who during the persecution suffered with constancy, flight, exile, loss of goods, torments, rather than renounce their religion. This refers to chapter xi. 35.

11. "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate be set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."

12. "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days."

13. "But go thou thy way, till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

AN
HISTORICAL DISCOURSE
ON THE
A P O C A L Y P S E*.

The Canon of the books of the New Testament formed as it were casually and irregularly by the zeal of individuals. The bad effect of this liberty. A diversity of sentiments concerning several Epistles. The Apocalypse, a proof of the irregularity with which the Canon of the New Testament was formed.

SECT. I.

IT ought not to be imagined that the canon of the sacred books, such as we now have it, was formed all at once in the days of the apostles. The first books, which came to the knowledge of the Christians, were undoubtedly the Gospels; then the Epistles, some sooner, others later. The churches to which they had been written communicated

* The following treatise was drawn up at the request of William Burnet, esq. Governor of New-York, at the time when several literati in England applied themselves to the study of the Apocalypse.

them

them reciprocally to one another: the Romans to the Corinthians, the Corinthians to the Romans; and this was the case of every Epistle, in proportion as an intercommunity among Christians enlarged. No shadow appears either of a council or a pope, or of sovereign authority, which settled the canon of the scriptures. This was the work of time. To-day, they added one book; to-morrow, another; "and this was done, says M. Basnage*, by certain individuals, who finding a composition conducive to piety, produced it to their church; and, adds he, they ever gave themselves such a liberty on this head, that they numbered among the canonical books, writings that were manifestly supposititious. The churches were divided in their sentiments, as well as individuals. Some rejected a book at the same time that others adopted it. They contested, they examined before they admitted. The second Epistle of St. Peter was not at first in the canon: several, says Eusebius, judged it useful, and they began to read it very carefully. He asserts the same with regard to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude. Very few of the ancients have spoken of these two compositions as divine. Some churches determined to read them. Hesitation continued a long time, but at last it was abo-

* History of the Church, book viii.

lished.

lished. St. Jerom also says of the Epistle of St. James, that it had acquired its authority gradually in a succession of time. The Epistle to the Hebrews, the second and third of St. John, became canonical in the same manner. Thus it was that the canon of scripture perfected itself in an insensible manner. This appears with greater clearness from the history we are going to give of the Apocalypse, and of the contradictions it hath experienced.

Sect. 2. Of all the writings which were composed immediately after those of the apostles, none remains to us but the first Epistle of St. Clement Romanus, which is the production of a very ancient writer, the book of Hermas, the Epistles which bear the name of Ignatius, with that of Polycarp.

Sect. 3. *Silence of Writers.*

In all these compositions we perceive no trace of the Apocalypse. It is true, their silence does not conclude against this book in particular, since neither have they spoken of the four gospels, or of the greatest part of the books of the New Testament.

Sect. 4. *Suppositions of Prochorus.*

The false Prochorus, who styled himself a disciple of the apostles, knew it much better: and this is what he relates concerning the life of St. John. This apostle acquainted the Christians

tians of Ephesus, that he had a revelation of Jesus Christ. They begged him to commit it to writing. The apostle dictated his gospel to Prochorus in the midst of lightnings, thunders, and earthquakes. Afterwards he wrote his Apocalypse with his own hand, as if he had set a greater value upon it than upon his gospel. But the pretended Prochorus, who here inserts himself among the agents on this occasion, was one of those honest Christians who sported with the credulity of the public, and, who decorating themselves with an excessive zeal for religion, did not even hide their derision under the mask of a heathen probity. His book is full of fables and absurdities. The term *hypostasis*, *consubstantial*, and others of the same nature, sufficiently mark the time when it was fabricated.

Sect. 5. *Cerintus suspected of being the author of the Apocalypse.*

After the death of the apostles* appeared Cerintus, a man infatuated with the notion of the temporal kingdom of a thousand years. This was an opinion which came originally from the Jews, and spread among the Christians. He founded his hypothesis upon the Apocalypse, which he maintained to be the work of St. John. But what reason soever he had to talk

* Eusebius Hist. lib. iii. cap. 28. and lib. vii. cap. 25.

in this manner, several orthodox Christians did not fail to suspect him of being the father of this production himself, because it appeared to them that this work favoured the reign of a thousand years, as we shall see hereafter.

Sect. 6. *Other heretics against the Apocalypse.*

In the mean time other heretics, Cerdon and Marcion, as Tertullian informs us*, and even the Alogiens†, according to Epiphanius, rose up against the Apocalypse, which they asserted was not written by St. John, because, among other reasons which they alledged, they said, in the time of this apostle there was no Christian church at Thyatira. This Epiphanius frankly allows them, and at the same time supposes, that when St. John writes to the church of Thyatira, he speaks not as if it was then existing, but by the spirit of prophecy.

Sect. 7. See then on the subject of the Apocalypse, heretics against heretics, while the orthodox as yet did not intermeddle in the question. At least we are entirely ignorant in what light they regarded this dispute.

Sect. 8. *Justin Martyr, the first advocate for the Apocalypse.*

Justin Martyr, who wrote about the year 170 of Christ, is the first of our divines, who

* Tertullian contra Marcionem, lib. iv.

† Epiphanius Hæres, 51.

hath made mention of the Apocalypse: and what is remarkable is, he attributes it to the apostle St. John. In his Dialogue with Trypho, this Jew asks him, if he thought Jerusalem would one day be rebuilt? Justin answers, that with regard to himself, he believed it would, as all the Christians too believed who thought justly, and adds: "There was amongst us a certain person called John, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ: he hath predicted in his Apocalypse, that the faithful shall dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem." This is the only time that Justin cites the Apocalypse in his works, and he cites it to prove the reign of a thousand years.

Sect. 9. It does not appear by the expressions of this Divine, that it was then received in all the churches: he seems here only to offer his own particular opinion, or at most the opinion of those Christians who thought justly on this subject, that is, who believed the reign of a thousand years. But it cannot be doubted but he cites of his own head a false gospel, when he says in this very Dialogue, "*that upon Jesus going down into Jordan, a fire was kindled there, and they heard this voice from heaven, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee!*" He asserts that the apostles wrote these things, which however are not found but only in the gospel of the Ebionites.

His

Sect. 10. *His Character.*

Not that he gave himself no trouble to be informed of the truth of facts. He had travelled a great deal, not as a common person, but as a curious antiquarian. We owe to him the tripod of the old sibyl of Cumæ, the three large and beautiful tubs in which she bathed, the sepulchre where her remains were deposited, and the books in which she spake of Jesus Christ. A new subject of banter and derision to the Heathens, who treated the Christians as *Sibyl-lists*, to whom Justin Martyr does not fail to address this grave admonition*: “O Greeks, give credit to the old and venerable Sibyl, whose books are spread throughout the world, and who was inspired in an extraordinary manner by the Almighty.” He declares his own firm persuasion of the truth of the story of the LXX. translators of the Bible, and of their divine version which they made in the time of king Herod; of the seventy cells where every one separately translated; and of their most wonderful agreement even in the smallest particles. Every circumstance of which Jerom treats as fabulous, but on which our Divine insists in favour of religion. “Do not imagine, O Greeks, that what we now tell you is a story framed at pleasure. I myself saw, in the Pharos of Alexan-

* Admonit. ad Græcos.

dria, the vestiges of those little mansions." Now was not this a demonstration, that the LXX. translators who were shut up in these apartments were really inspired? The statue erected by the Romans to Simon Magus, with an inscription that enrolls him among the gods; though in the judgment of those antiquarians who have seen it, Justin unfortunately read *Simon* instead of *Semon*, a god of the Sabines, is another discovery resulting from these researches, worthy such a philosopher as Justin Martyr. And is not this a specimen of what his genius would have done, if he had employed it in the Apocalypse?

Sect. II. *Irenæus, the second advocate.*

Irenæus, who flourished afterwards, often quotes* it under the name of John, the disciple of our Lord. He was of a different character from Justin; and the strength of testimony almost entirely depends on the qualities of the witness. Justin visited places in person, he chose to see things with his own eyes, though his sight was not the acuteest in the world. Irenæus, on the contrary, only saw with the eyes of others. To authenticate what he says, he scarce ever produces any thing but the tradition or testimony of a certain old man whom

* Irenæus, lib. iv. cap. 37, &c.

he never knew, and whose memory old age had unquestionable impaired, otherwise, among other fables, he never would have asserted that Jesus Christ died in the fiftieth year of his age, in order that he might pass through all the various stages of life and sanctify them. However, Irenæus does not fail to avail himself of the Apocalypse towards the end of his third book, where, he endeavours to establish the reign of a thousand years. And in this very place he establishes his opinion also on the prophecy of Baruch as a book of sacred scripture. This approbation which he gives to the Apocalypse, would undoubtedly have great weight, if he did not allow the same authority to the Apocryphal books. *The scripture hath declared*, says he, but after this solemn beginning we find that this scripture is in a passage of Hermas, a book cited as canonical by the ancients. The book of Hermas appears at first sight not unlike the Apocalypse, only that one begins with morality and ends with vision, whilst the other begins with visions and ends with morality.

Sect. 12. Besides, it is not manifest from Irenæus that the Apocalypse was received by all the Christians of his time. We meet only with simple allegations of passages, without his telling us how he knew that it was composed by St. John, or even what his old man thought of it, whom he often introduces, and for things of much less importance.

Sect. 13. But one may judge what he was capable of doing on this subject, by the method which he took to convince the world of the truth of the four gospels. What method was this think you? Did he visit all the churches, consult the archives, and verify the originals? This discussion would have been too tedious. Behold what he, with great modesty, calls a demonstration; for it contains several of them*: “There are four quarters of the world, and four cardinal winds; consequently there are four gospels in the church, as there are also four pillars that support it, and four breaths of life which render it immortal. The four animals in Ezekiel’s vision mark the four states of the Son of God. The lion, is his royal dignity; the calf, his priesthood; the beast with the face of man, his human nature; the eagle, his spirit which descends on the church. To these four animals correspond the four gospels, on which our Lord is seated: John, who teaches his celestial origin, is the Lion, his gospel being full of confidence; Luke, who begins with the priesthood of Zacharia, is the Calf; Matthew, who describes the genealogy of Jesus Christ according to the flesh, is the Animal resembling a man; Mark, who begins with the prophetic spirit, coming from above, that is, with a pas-

* Irenæus, lib. iii. cap. 11.

sage from the prophet Isaiah, is the Eagle. This gospel is the shortest of all, because brevity is the character of prophecy. Another demonstration of the four gospels—There have been four covenants, the first under Adam, the second under Noah, the third under Moses, the fourth under Jesus Christ; from whence Irenæus concludes, agreeably to the rules of his logic, that those are vain, rash, and ignorant, who receive more or less than four gospels.

Sect. 14. Modern divines, however, highly value the testimony of this Father. He had seen, say they, Papias and Polycarp, both disciples of St. John, and through their channel truth could easily flow as far as him. But the way is much longer than they imagine, before the Apocalypse can be made to pass into the hands of Irenæus. Papias was dead before Polycarp, and Irenæus speaks of the last as of a person very ancient, whom he just remembers to have seen when he was very young. Thus he never alledges their conversation, but only their writings; and in those writings there is no mention made of the Apocalypse. In the second place, Polycarp suffered martyrdom* in the year 167 of Christ. Suppose him to be then 86, which is a very great age, since in 158 he took a journey to Rome, from whence

* Eusebii Chronic.

he afterwards returned to Asia, he must have been but a child in St. John's time, taking the supposition as certain, that this apostle lived to an extreme old age. Thus neither he nor Papias could hardly be able to know any thing at all of St. John, but by the tradition of persons who were older than them.

Sect. 15. But without recurring to calculations, let us hear Papias himself who was a little older than Polycarp†. "When I met, says he, with any disciples of the ancients, I studiously derived what information I could from their conversation. I asked them what Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of Christ had said: for I found the reading of books less useful than personal instructions." Papias shews us the source from which he drew. He does not say that he had conversed with St. John. Most certainly he would have done himself this honour, in order to give the greater credit to his collections. He only says, that he interrogated those who had seen St. John, or some other apostle. Papias styled himself the disciple of John, surnamed the Priest, who must not be confounded with the Evangelist, and to whom some of the ancients have attributed the Apocalypse. These reflections are

• Eusebii Chronic. lib. iii. cap. 39.

not mine, but Eusebius's, who had read the writings of Papias : and it is doing no injury to St. John to deprive him of a pupil whom this historian treats as a man of *very indifferent abilities, and extremely credulous*, who swallowed all kinds of stories, and made the apostles say what they never thought of.

Sect. 16. *Melito.*

Before Irenæus I ought to have name Melito, among whose works there was a treatise, entitled, *Concerning the Devil in the Apocalypse*, as Eusebius* relates. As the work is lost, we know no more of it, and are ignorant whether he there spoke well or ill of the Apocalypse. It was in effect attacked in books written on purpose by some of the ancients, which Dionysius of Alexandria cites without naming them. Perhaps Melito was of this number, perhaps he was not. It is a question, like many others, which probably can never be cleared up.

Sect. 17. *Apollonius, Theophilus.*

The case is not the same with Apollonius and Theophilus of Antioch. Eusebius† informs us, that the first made use of the Apocalypse in a treatise against the Montanists; and amongst the works of the second, there is, says

* Hist. lib. iv. cap. 26,

† Ibid. lib. v. cap. 8.

the same Eusebius, *a book against the heresy of Hermogenes, in which he employs proofs drawn from the Revelation of John.* If these books were not lost, one might there see in what manner they quoted the Apocalypse against their adversaries, and if they ascribed it to St. John the Evangelist.

Sect. 18. "The first fathers, says M. Simon*, sometimes adopt in their disputes the method of rhetoricians, who very often employ arguments purely plausible, and doubtful actions, by which one must not always be governed." It is for this that St. Jerom commends them, far from imputing it to them as any thing culpable. "Disputation, says he, hath no law. One must oppose to one's adversary, sometimes this, sometimes that, and argue in the best manner one can; say one thing and do another; make a shew of offering bread and yet all the while grasp a stone. He confesses that this was his custom as well as that of the ancients†." "See here, he adds, their manner of disputing: what suppleness and blandishment do they employ to defeat the plots of the devil: they asserted not what they thought, but what the necessity of the argument obliged them to assert. Hence arose those frequent distinctions of speaking *according to truth, and*

* Critical History of the New Testament, chap. 23.

† Jerom. Epist. ad Paren.

speaking according to management. Hence that vast number of quotations from Apocryphal pieces, and other frauds, which are now styled *pious*, out of complaisance to them."

Sect. 19. But to return to Theophilus; how should he have scrupled to allege against heretics the Apocalypse, who quotes against the heathens * the verses of the Sibyl as true prophecies, in which the actions of the emperors are historically related, and in which there is in express terms mention made of Christ, of Antichrist, of the name of Jesus, which makes 888, of the number of Rome, namely, 948, of the second destruction of Jerusalem, of the destruction of Rome, of the resurrection, of the reign of a thousand years, of the fire of hell, and other predictions of the Apocalypse. It is true that Theophilus and other fathers have brandished these arms with an air of confidence, which seems rather to manifest their honesty than their judgment. Justin himself suffered his fancy to be dazzled with them when they were just fresh and new from the forge of the impostor who fabricated them, who, according to all probability was some Christian Montanist.

Sect. 20. *End of the second century. St. Clemens.*

Clemens Alexandrinus who closes the second century, gives also his testimony to the Apo-

• Ad Autolycum.

calypse. To shew that a Christian ought not to wear fantastic apparel and cloaths embroidered with gold, he alleges that vision in which white robes are given to the martyrs. He does not say that the book was written by the apostle St. John, but he amply recompenses for this omission by informing us that there was an Apocalypse of St. Peter. "The scripture informs us, says he*, that exposed children are under the protection of a guardian angel. They shall live, it asserts, to an hundred; and St. Peter in his Apocalypse says, there issued from these children a flash of lightning which dazzled the eyes of the women." This Apocalypse of St. Peter, which as Sozomen informs us, they read in the churches of Palestine, was so much esteemed by St. Clement, that not only he gave it a place among his select prophecies, but he also in his instructions commented upon it as a sacred book. He calls the prophecy of Baruch, *divine scripture*, when the angel reveals to Hermas, *a divine communication*, and the book of Tobit, *scripture by way of eminence*. He draws his authorities from the book of Wisdom, from Ecclesiasticus, from the Epistles of Clemens Romanus, and from Barnabas, which he quotes as canonical books. He cites in the same manner the preaching of St. Peter,

* Stromata, 841.

the travels of St. Paul, the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel according to the Egyptians, the traditions of Matthias, of Hydaftus; in short, it is hard to say what he does not quote. Could not a man, who had read all these curiosities, believe in the Apocalypse? I do not know where he picked up this anecdote, that St. Paul exhorted the world to read the books of the Sibyls. "In fine, says father Simon*, he employed every expedient against the Pagans, and cared little whether the books from which he computed them were true or false, provided they were conformable to his own sentiments. However this father was in the opinion of St. Jerom, the wisest man that ever flourished among the Christians. I do not think these remarks unuseful, as they have for their object the estimate we ought to form of the testimony of the fathers.

Sect. 21. *Tertullian.*

But of all the ancient divines Tertullian is the most explicit; and as he was a zealous advocate for the Millenarians, whom he had defended in a book purposely written on this subject, so he very frequently declares himself in favour of the Apocalypse, which he ascribes to St. John the Evangelist, and on which he grounds certain opinions which have no less need of such an authority. If

* Castigatinus ad Opus Vossii.

he wants to prove, for example, that the soul is corporeal, and that it falls under the senses he alleges* that passage of the Apocalypse, "I *saw* under the altar the *souls* of those who had been slain for the word of God." In another place† he intends to demonstrate to the Marcionites, that the Gospel according to St. Luke hath not been corrupted; for the truth of this he appeals to the churches, whose doctrine was conformable to this very Gospel: "We have churches also, which were formed by St. John; for though Marcion rejects his Apocalypse, yet the succession of bishops, if we go back to the source, proves that St. John is the author." It is true, these last words are equivocal, and one does not know, whether this succession of bishops tends to make St. John acknowledged for the author of the Apocalypse, or for the author and first bishop of the churches of Asia, which last sense is more agreeable to Tertullian's design. The question between the Marcionites and him, was not to discover whether St. John was the author of the Apocalypse, but if the Gospel of St. Luke, which the churches of Asia made use of, was authentic and in no respect altered. The testimony of these churches must be of considerable authority. They had been formed and

* Lib. de Anima.

† Lib. iv. contra Marcionitas:

trained up in the doctrine of St. John, and to be convinced of it, it was sufficient to have read the first chapter of the Apocalypse. But as the Marcionites rejected this book, Tertullian refers them to the succession of the bishops, who called themselves the successors of St. John, and who acknowledged him to be the founder of their churches.

Sect. 22. Let this be as it may, it is certain from the words themselves of this father, that far from rejecting the Apocalypse, after the example of the Marcionites, he regarded it as the work of St. John, the founder of the seven churches of Asia. Whoever doubts of it need only read this other passage in the same author concerning the new Jerusalem, which is described in the the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse. "We acknowledge that we have a reign of a thousand years on earth, namely, the resurrection for a thousand years in the city of Jerusalem, built by the hand of God, and coming down from heaven. Ezekiel knew it, St. John saw it, and the new prophecies, in which we believe, have even represented the plan of it before it was constructed, to serve as a sign when it should appear. In truth, this sign did appear a little while ago, by a phænomenon exhibited in the East, of which the heathens themselves are witnesses. There was seen in Judea, for forty days together in the morning, a city hanging in the air, whose walls diminished

minished in proportion as the day encreased, and at last disappeared *."

Sect. 23. These words need no comment, except that, the new prophecies, which Tertulian here puts on the same footing with the Apocalypse, were the revelations of Prisca and Maximilla, women, who to the number of ten, exercised the function of prophetesses. The city hanging in the air, of which the Pagans themselves had been eye witnesses, and which resembled the Jerusalem in the Apocalypse, is a very singular event, which would prove at once the divinity of this book. It is an unlucky circumstance that the phænomenon happened to disappear at the point of day, just when the spectators were beginning to see it.

Sect. 24. It cannot be denied, that this great divine had too much fondness for visions: those of the shepherd Hermas must be extremely to his taste. Thus he cites them as a book of holy scripture. He also heavily complains that the Jews had excluded from their canon the prophecy of Enoch, and several other pieces of this kind.

Sect. 25. *Origen.*

Origen, another Millenary, in his preface to the Gospel of St. John, and in his seventh Ho-

* Lib. iii. contra Marcion.

mily on Joshua, makes mention of the Apocalypse, under the name of the apostle St. John, and in his Commentaries on St. Matthew, he calls it the *Oracles of the Apocalypse*. It is rather a disadvantage that he adopted, and took under his protection the *Oracles of the Sibyl* in his books against Celsus, where he ought to have been more circumspect and exact than in his Commentaries and in his Homilies. His honesty even transports him to challenge this Pagan to cite the ancient copies of the Sibylline books, in which, what the Christians alledge, is not found : which it was not possible for him to do : but what would have been much easier for him, was to shew the falsehood of these Oracles.

Sect. 26. And in order to be the better assured of the critical exactness of Origen, in distinguishing the true and genuine writings, for before we credit a witness we ought to know him, let us remark, that this father had a very high esteem for the visions of Hermas; that not only he believed them to be very useful, but calls them an inspired scripture of God. Did he ever say as much of the Apocalypse? This very Apocalypse, why might he not have acknowledged it, on the credit of the title, to be the production of St. John? He received many others of the same kind with much less scruple. He doubted not but the Epistle, which bears the name of St. Barnabas, was truly his,

his, and the book of Wisdom to be really written by Solomon. He hath even cited the Apocalypse of Elias; and the Apocalypse of St. Paul. He even asserts that this apostle hath inserted in his Epistle several sentences of the Apocalypse of Elias. To these two Apocalypses add that of St. Peter, which Clemens Alexandrinus hath canonized, you will then have three Apocalypses to add to this of St. John, which could not escape the researches of Origen. He expressly places the prophecy of Baruch in the number of the canonical books. He alleges the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the book of the twelve Apostles, the Testament of the twelve Patriarchs, the doctrine of St. Peter, the acts of St. Paul, the dispute between Joseph and Jacob, which he cites with the same eulogy, the book of Jaunes and Mamtres, and such like, from which it is his custom to borrow his authorities. He had learned this method from his master Clemens, and it was not uncommon to the divines of this century. He attributed to Daniel the story of Susannah, which he defended in a book composed expressly on the subject.

Sect. 27. Posterity would have been under greater obligations to him if he had employed his criticism to prove that the Apocalypse is in reality St. John's, though he should only have told us that it was acknowledged by all the Christians of his time: for to cite a book, is not to declare

declare it canonical. St. Jude alledges the prophecy of *Enoch*, and even the *assumption of Moses*, in which the author had spoken of the combat of Michael the archangel with the Devil; two books which however were not in the catalogue of the Jews. Origen and other fathers might make use of the Apocalypse, though it might not have yet been in the canon.

Sect. 28. *St. Hippolytus.*

The authority of Hippolytus, the friend of Origen, would be more considerable. Father Combefis hath published a little treatise of his upon the twelve apostles: the article respecting St. John is the following: "John was banished by Domitian into the isle of Patmos, where he wrote his Gospel, and where he had the vision of the Apocalypse. He fell asleep at Ephesus; they searched for his remains, but could not find them." You have not here a rhetorician who transiently cites the Apocalypse, as the fathers do; but you have an historian, who informs himself of facts, and relates them.

Sect. 29. But to speak my sentiments freely, I have difficulty in believing this treatise to be Hippolytus's. Though it consist but of twelve little articles, it does not fail to cite at least as many little fables.

Sect. 30. This is not however the reason that would hinder us from ascribing it to Hippo-

lytus. This is pretty much the character of antiquity. "Every body knows, says M. Dupin on another subject, that the books of the first Christians are full of fables, that the fathers applied themselves entirely to things of the greatest importance at that time, that they gave credit to several acts of the apostles, and to a number of other monuments undoubtedly supposititious."

Sect. 31. Father Combefis sees in these words, *They searched for the remains of St. John, and found them not*; the true spirit of Hippolytus, who sincerely believed that St. John never died. With regard to myself, with this critic's permission, I think I see the genius of an author, who lived at soonest in the fourth century, since they then began to search for relics, and raise a dust in the graves of deceased saints.

Sect. 32. St. Hippolytus, as Eusebius says, had written a treatise on the Apocalypse: this is all we know of it. But we have an Homily of his against Christmas, in which he thus speaks: "He, who said, In the beginning was the word, hath afterwards said in his Apocalypse, His name is the word of God." It could not be declared in more express terms, that the Apocalypse is the writing of St. John the Evangelist. It is also true, that in this same Homily, he styles the pretended prophecy of Baruch, *Scripture, by way of excellency*.

Sect.

Sect. 33. *Homilies.*

Now I have mentioned Homilies, it is proper to know something of them, and what expence the fathers were at to satisfy their people. St. Jerom had one day consulted his master, St. Gregory Nazianzen, a grave man, about his finding such a deficiency of wisdom in general councils: "Come to my sermon, said he to him, I will teach you what you are ignorant of. The people will not fail to applaud me; and you yourself be forced to surrender, unless you choose to pass for a brute. Any empty prating coxcomb can impose upon his auditory; the less they comprehend, the more they admire." It is Jerom, who hath preserved this little anecdote concerning Gregory, and the Homily of Hippolytus sufficiently illustrates it*.

Sect. 34. *St. Cyprian.*

St. Cyprian, to return to the Apocalypse, is not so explicit as Hippolytus, though he often cites it, especially in his books to Quirinus, which are only extracts from scripture, in which he ranks Tobit, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, Baruch, the Maccabees, as divinely inspired books, without making any difference between them and the Apocalypse. If he cites it, it is always

* Epist. ad Nepot.

without naming the author, but in exchange he informs us that Ecclesiastes, and Wisdom are the books of Solomon. It is true, that in his *Treatise on the apparel of virgins*, he produces a passage of the Apocalypse under the denomination of *Divine Scripture*: but a few lines above, he had just said; The scripture saith, "Of what use hath pride been to us, or what have we profited by the vain glory of riches?" Words that are taken from the apocryphal book of Wisdom, *in which the Holy Spirit*, says he another place, *teaches us by the mouth of Solomon*. So true is it, that there was not then among Christians a settled canon of the scriptures.

Sect. 35. In his exhortation to martyrdom, after having applied the mysterious number seven to the seven days of the creation, to the seven thousand years of the duration of the world, to the seven spirits which are before God, to the seven lamps of the tabernacle, to the seven candlesticks of the Apocalypse, to the seven pillars of wisdom, to the seven children of the barren woman, to the seven women who took one man for their husband, and all this to come at the seven brothers of the Maccabees; he adds, that St. Paul hath made mention of the number seven as of a privileged number, and this is the reason why he did not write but to seven churches. This is probably what St. Cyprian had picked up in some apocryphal
book

book of this apostle, or by a particular revelation. For he had often in the night, as he says himself, visions and dreams, which he rehearsed the next morning to his church as intelligence from heaven; or in default of visions, he made little children come to him, who in their trances instructed him in the truth. Such was the fruit of a too frequent converse with the writings of Tertullian, into which he had thrown himself without being previously fortified with proper preservatives against the most contagious imagination that ever existed.

Sect. 36. These are the fathers of the first rank, and if I may so speak, the body-guards of tradition, giving their depositions in favour of the Apocalypse. I do not think I have omitted any one in that period of time that flowed from Justin Martyr to the middle of the third century. Exactness was so much the more necessary, as those who came later, do not shew as good letters of credit as the ancients who lived nearer the time of St. John: among these, some, as hath been justly remarked, allege the Apocalypse without naming the author; others allege it without saying whether it is St. John's the Apostle, or St. John's the Priest; in fine, the greatest part, who are Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, and Hippolytus, cite it as a work of the apostle St. John.

Sect. 37. *A list of the Anti-Apocalypsarians.*

But before we proceed farther, it is but just also to interrogate their contemporaries. One has already seen heretics divided; we shall see the same division among the defenders of truth.

Sect. 28. *St. Ignatius.*

To go back even beyond Justin Martyr, we do not perceive a single trace of the Apocalypse in the seven Epistles of St. Ignatius, of which there are three that are directed to the churches of Ephesus, Philadelphia, and Smyrna, the same, to which the author of the Apocalypse addresses himself. Ignatius greatly extols the Ephesians in that they had been instructed by St. Paul; why not honour them on account of the long residence of St. John at Ephesus, the particular care he had taken of them, the writings he had deposited with them, to put, say they, the last hand to the Canon of the New Testament? The memory of it must have been quite recent, since Ignatius wrote his letters in the year 107 of Christ. This silence is rather remarkable, especially in a disciple of St. John. There might arise some suspicion against the truth of these facts, which should come from a source less pure, and much more suspected.

Sect.

Sect. 39. *Papias.*

Papias almost reached the time of St. John. He also does not mention the Apocalypse. Eusebius particularizes the books of the New Testament to which Papias gave testimony. The Apocalypse does not appear amongst them. And in another place, when this historian runs over the witnesses of the Apocalypse, he again omits Papias, whose writings however he had read. He even remarks that this Divine taught the reign of a thousand years, and that he did not support his system but on an unwritten tradition. A Millenarian, not to cite the Apocalypse in the same book in which he would establish his opinion, is a little singular! But let us proceed to something more explicit.

Sect. 40. *Ancient Divines.*

Several Divines, who lived before Dionysius of Alexandria, as he assures us himself in a long fragment which Eusebius preserved to us, made critical and particular remarks on the Apocalypse. These Theologians must have been very ancient, since Dionysius, who had read them, and who quotes them, wrote about the middle of the third century: nor did they merely reject the Apocalypse; they also refuted all the chapters of it step by step, as being a composition, they said, destitute of sense and reason. In the second place, they maintained

that the inscription of it was false, that this book was not written by St. John, nor even by any apostolic person. They added that Cerinthus was the author of it, and that he had made use of a great name to give the more weight to his reveries, and the better to insinuate his opinion concerning the reign of a thousand years. In fine, they drew their last difficulties from the nature of revelation, which ought to be clear and intelligible, since it is not given but with this design: from whence they concluded, that a book, such as the Apocalypse is, covered with a thick veil, cannot have proceeded from the Spirit of God.

Sect. 41. One sees that these ancients, whose writings are lost, entered into a pretty large detail, and that all their criticism confined itself to two kinds of remarks, the one drawn from plain reason, and the nature itself of things; the other of an external nature, respecting facts and authorities. One ought not much to regret the loss of the first: one is always in a condition to repair them with the aid of that universal reason, which belongs to all times and to all places. Every one is able to read the Apocalypse, to judge of the work by the work itself, to see if it is as obscure, as impenetrable, as destitute of sense and reason as these authors pretend. The knowledge of facts, which they might have at hand, would be at this day more necessary, and would deliver us from that
uncer-

uncertainty into which the want of monuments throws us. This part of their criticism which had for its object to prove that the Apocalypse was the composition of Cerinthus, would in some measure supply the profound silence which reigns in history from St. John to Justin, the first witness for the Apocalypse. Perhaps also amidst all that they advanced, and to the stock itself of their objections we might find wherewith to answer them and satisfy ourselves at the same time. This would not be the first time that truth would be defended with the arms destined to militate against it. It was not merely in the time of Julian the emperor, and in the fort even of his attacks, that she discovered and borrowed new succours.

Sect. 42. *Caius the Latin Priest.*

To these Divines, who were Greeks, must be joined a Latin author, who was in reputation about the year 200 of Christ. This was the priest Caius, the oracle of the church of Rome, who set himself as a buckler against the heretics of that time. In a dispute which he had with the Millenarians, he thus speaks: "Cerinthus alleging certain revelations, as written by a great apostle, vends prodigies, which he himself hath feigned, as if they had been discovered to him by angels. He asserts that after the resurrection there will be a reign of Jesus Christ on earth, and that men shall enjoy bodily pleasures in Jerusalem."

rusalem." He adds, that they shall spend a thousand years in nuptial and continual festivals.

Sect. 43. There is no doubt but by these supposed revelations to a great apostle, as having received them from angels, Caius denotes the Apocalypse, which he believed to be Cerinthus's and not St. John's. There is mention there of a first resurrection, of a reign of a thousand years, which was to ensue it, of a new Jerusalem, and of the nuptials of the Lamb, to which men would be invited. Now these things are explained by the Millenarians of a temporal felicity, and particularly supported on the authority of the Apocalypse, which Caius here rejects without distinction, as chimeras vended by Cerinthus, under the name of a great apostle.

Sect. 44. One must then in truth confess that Caius had in view the Apocalypse: and it is thus Eusebius* understands him, who had read the work of this divine. For after having cited the words which we have just related, he immediately subjoins another passage of Dionysius of Alexandria, *who alleges an ancient tradition left to the church, that Cerinthus chose the title of THE APOCALYPSE OF ST. JOHN, as a great name, to give the greater credit to his own reveries.*

* Euseb. lib. iii. cap. 18.

I should not have insisted on a thing, which appears to me as clear as the day, if M. Dupin had not affected to throw in some scruples without necessity, to insinuate that Caius meant, perhaps, a false revelation, different from the Apocalypse. Truly it is pleasant to see the church of Rome, which styles herself the sole pillar of truth, entrust at that time her interests to a man who spoke so disrespectfully of a divine book, without being disavowed either by the pope or by any ecclesiastical assembly.

Sect. 45. *His Character.*

Every one does not know perhaps what sort of man this Caius was. It will not be unuseful to make him better known. The church was full of forgers, who counterfeited the style of the apostles, some as the heretics, with a design to insinuate their errors with the greater ease; and others, under the pious pretence, that devout fables would attract more veneration to Christianity. One then saw nothing appear but false Gospels, false Acts, false Epistles, false Apocalypses, and other phantoms of revelation which fraud produced, and which it was capable of animating with the spirit of antiquity to that degree, that the wisest and most intelligent gave into the illusion. Our Caius would not augment the number of dupes, and like sensible spectators of the drama, who are not wholly occupied by the outward decorations,

tions, he went behind the scenes to examine the cords and springs which played off the imposture.

Sect. 46. But whether it were that experience had rendered him too diffident, as we learn from Eusebius, or whether he reasoned from party interest, which is far from being unnatural to the human mind, he became very troublesome in the dispute. If they denied his principles, he banished his adversaries; and without using any discretion he laid a heavy hand upon every thing that opposed him.

Sect. 47. There are but few of the Ancients who have not enlarged the Canon of Scripture with some apocryphal piece; he reduced it as much as he could. Happy, had he done nothing but cleared the crop, but with tares he pulled up the good grain. Disputing one day in the presence of Pope Zepharin against the Montanists, who objected to him a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he had the boldness to maintain, that it was neither St. Paul's, nor was canonical; and he averred it with so peremptory an air, that he not merely confounded these good people who did not expect any such thing, but he came at last to influence by his authority the Western churches, who would not admit this epistle. Is this then the tradition that is now so much boasted, and of which the fathers must have been the faithful depositaries? Some who supposed false productions, others who

who stripped the churches of their proper writings?

Sect. 48. It is strange, that in order to combat with more advantage, Caius should reduce himself to such an extremity, as to exclude the Apocalypse from the number of the sacred books. He needed only to have given a spiritual meaning to the reign of a thousand years; have said, for instance, with St. Cassian, that Jerusalem might be understood four ways: according to history, for the city of the Jews; according to allegory, for the church of Jesus Christ; according to analogy, for the heavenly city; according to anthropology, for the soul of man. These were the strong batteries against Jerusalem, which the Millenarians expected, and so much the stronger, as an allegory tolerably conducted, or any comparison how little specious soever, made at that time greater impression than the most conclusive arguments would have done. After all, he had only to entrench himself in the obscurity of the book, and this is the part which St. Dionysius of Alexandria is going to take.

Sect. 49. *St. Dionysius of Alexandria.*

Not that he had no inclination to reject the Apocalypse: he was strongly against the reign of a thousand years; and in his work, which he entitled *Of the Promises*, he answers the objections of Nepos, the principal of the Egyptian Mille-

Millenariant. The Apocalyse embarrassed him a little, but he was not so hardy as Caius. He is not willing, however, that the Millenarians should be ignorant that it was a book very much contested. "Some of my predecessors, says he, have rejected it entirely, and have refuted it chapter by chapter, making it appear that it was destitute of sense and reason; that the inscription of it was false; that it was not composed by St. John, but by Cerinthus, who had a mind to avail himself of a great name to give the greater weight to his reveries:" and other motives which we have produced above.

Sect. 50. After setting out in this manner, and if I may so speak, sent out his forlorn hope, as it were to check the onset of the Millenarians who pressed him, he comes to tell us his own sentiments of this book, or at least what he affects to think of it. "With regard to myself, adds he, I dare not absolutely reject this book, especially because several of my friends receive it. I regard it as vastly above my reach: I believe it contains an admirable sense, but a sense mysterious and recondite: for though I understand nothing of it, I suspect, however, that there is some meaning latent under the words; and yielding more to faith than my own understanding, I esteem it too sublime to be understood by any man like me. Thus I guard against condemning what I do

not

not understand, and I do admire much what I cannot comprehend."

Sect. 51. I do not know what judgment my reader will form of the reflections of St. Dionysius: with regard to myself, I find in them more of compliance than of conviction, more complaisance than persuasion. He begins with declaring the authority of the Apocalypse to be problematical; he exhibits the objections of its adversaries, and what is worse, he gives himself no trouble to answer them. After such preliminaries, which do not appear hazarded without design, there remained nothing for him but to reject openly the Apocalypse; but reasons of politeness and civility prevent him: several of his friends respected this book; he could not think of disobliging them. The politeness of this Divine surpassed the simplicity of his time; and though the opinion of the Millenarians appeared dangerous to him, he does not fail to treat Nepos with great regards: he esteems him, he honours him, and nothing is more flattering than the eulogies he gives him. A man who conducted himself in this civil manner towards his adversaries, what would he not have done for his friends? Thus he dares not absolutely reject the Apocalypse: it is only in another respect that he came to know the beauties of it: he honestly owns that he understands nothing of it; he believes the sense to be admirable, but it is concealed. He yields more

to faith than to his own judgment, meaning, to the faith of his friends, for his own faith was not a thing distinct from his own judgment; at least, it was not that faith of scripture, which is an evidence of things not seen. The faith of St. Dionysius proceeded only to a mere suspicion; and if this suspicion was blended with admiration, one cannot regard it but as an additional compliment which he pays his friends. One might indeed ask in effect, how it is possible to admire what one does not understand? but this would be using incivility towards a man who carried his complaisance so far.

Sect. 52. He will return you a more plain and explicit answer, if you interrogate him concerning the author of the Apocalypse: though he was by no means of a contradicting disposition, yet he says, a little farther, "I could not easily be induced to think that this book is the work of St. John." He even endeavours to prove to you the contrary, by a kind of contrast which he institutes between the writings of this apostle and the Apocalypse, which he attributes to another John. But for fear his friends should be displeased at his thus weakening the authority of this book, "I believe, however, adds he, that this John was a person inspired by the Holy Ghost." He observes, that besides the Evangelist, there have been several persons of the same name; among others, John, surnamed Mark, who is mentioned in the Acts.

Acts. He does not, however, mean him, but another, who lived in Asia, as well as the apostle, both being buried at Ephesus, where their tombs, as they say, were to be seen. See here the reasons, which he alleges to show, that the Apocalypse was not written by St. John the Apostle: 1. The former does not prefix his name to his books, and always speaks of himself in the third person; whilst the author of the Apocalypse hath put his name to it, speaks always of himself in the first person; and names himself two or three times. 2. The Gospel and the Epistles begin in the same manner; one finds there the same thoughts repeated almost in the same terms; in fine, it is the same genius, the same style: but the genius and style of the Apocalypse are very different. 3. The apostle never speaks of the Apocalypse in his Epistles. 4. It is full of solecisms and barbarous expressions; but the compositions of St. John are written in much better Greek.

Sect. 53. This is, in short, the criticism of St. Dionysius, which is much commended by Eusebius and Jerom. Much might be said on this topic, if one undertook to write a Dissertation. Every one allows that John the Evangelist was inspired of God: but how did Dionysius know, that the other Dionysius was so too? Was it by the book itself of the Apocalypse? St. Dionysius meant no such thing.

Sect. 54. None can deny that the style of the Gospel and of the Epistles of St. John is purer than that of the Apocalypse. However, one finds here sometimes the same expressions. It is said in the Gospel, ch. xix. 35, *He that saw, bare witness*: and in ch. xxi. 24, *This is the disciple that witnesseth these things*. And in 1 Epist. ch. i. 1, 2, *What we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, that do we testify*. The same manner of certifying is found in the beginning of the Apocalypse: *His servant John, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw*: which contains also an allusion to the Word which is described in the first chapter of the Gospel. And not merely does the Apocalypse give the name of Word to Jesus Christ; it also calls him the Lamb, who hath loved us, and who hath washed away our sins with his blood;—terms peculiar to St. John, which are found in his Epistles and in his Gospel.

Sect. 55. Certainly if the author of the Apocalypse was not St. John, at least he intended that he should be taken for him: therefore what opinion must one have of his sincerity? And how could St. Dionysius believe, that he was a man inspired of God?

Sect. 56. The rash Caius, who took him for an impostor, supported himself much better. He acted also more frankly than St. Dionysius, whom I very much suspect of dissimulation.

This method, the honour of which St. Jerom gives to the ancients, was then very common : but that which entirely confirms me in this belief, is the account of one of his successors to the Patriarchate of Alexandria : “ St. Dionysius, these are St. Athanasius’s words, did not frankly speak what he thought : he accommodated himself to times and persons ; like a skilful gardener, who prunes, plants, pulls up, according to the quality of the trees and of the soil. This different demeanour, which is a proof of address, render him worthy of admiration. He wrote, continues Athanasius, with studied discretion, and what one writes in this manner, ought never to be taken literally, nor as every person would wish it.

Sect. 57. After this, I believe it is useless to dispute any more with a man who did not speak what he thought : it is much better to deduce from his words a consequence which will have more relation to our subject. He does not reject the Apocalypse, especially because several of his good friends receive it. He does not say, all the churches : if several in his time received it, it means that several also rejected it. The favourable judgment of some does not prove that it was then in the canon, since the persons who cite it, have also alleged as divine books, a number of pieces undoubtedly apocryphal. Now, from the circumstance that some rejected it, not in secret, but in the

face of the churches, without passing for heretics, it follows, that it was not then as yet in the canon.

Sect. 58. What evinces it in a manner still more explicit is, that collection entitled, *Apostolical Canons*, not that the apostles were the authors of them, but because that this code of the ancient church was composed by apostolical men. Thus it was, that formerly they gave it the name of *Ancient Canons*, *Ecclesiastical Canons*, a title which they bear in several manuscripts, as Cotelier has remarked. Not only Justinian praises them in the 6th of his Novellæ, but they are also quoted in the Theodosian code, in the synod of Constantinople, anno 394, and even six times in the council of Nice. At farthest, they are late in the third century, as Aubepine, Beveridge, and Dupin have proved, who judges with reason, that it is a collection of canons of several councils, held before that of Nice. We find then in the 85th article of this collection, a catalogue of books in the Old and New Testament. In this catalogue the Apocalypse does not appear: and this is not the voice of a single individual, it is in some measure the whole church that speaks, at least, that approves.

Sect. 59. There is even this difference between the fathers who admitted the Apocalypse, and those who have excluded it, that the first contented themselves with citing it, without say-
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ing how it came down to them from the hands of the apostle John. They appear not to doubt of any thing : possession is to them instead of a title ; and this honesty of theirs would prove a favourable prejudice, if it had not led them so far as to give an asylum to supposititious writings. Others, on the contrary, more diffident, scrupulously examined, descended into critical detail and exactness, searched literary monuments and brought them to the severe test of scripture. If they are unhappy enough to have wandered from the truth, they are however entitled to our commendations for the pains they employed to prevent themselves from being deceived.

Sect. 60. That which weakens a little the authority of these fathers is, that they disputed at the same time against the reign of a thousand years ; and as this question ought naturally to be decided by the Apocalypse, perhaps they only refused this tribunal, because they thought it too favourable to the Millenarians : for what is not the spirit of party capable, of ? Church history furnishes but too many examples of it ; and without going farther, have we not seen Caius reject the Epistle to the Hebrews, under this pretence, that it taught the rigid doctrine of the Montanists ? We must not, however, push this reflection too far, for fear it should happen to rebound against the advocates for the Apocalypse, themselves Millenarians, and consequently

secently interested in the defence of this book; Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, the most ancient and most illustrious of the fathers, have never spoken more worthily of it, than when the point in question has been to establish their favourite dogma, the foundation of their brightest hopes. Origen alone, who came after them, and to whom time had given greater illumination, rejected this dogma, and at the same time received the Apocalypse. He possessed the mystical sense in perfection, and with this talent he turned all the scripture into allegory, except the only place which ought least of all to be understood literally. If in Balaam's ass he could see Jesus Christ loaded with our sins, if he found mysteries even in the cauldrons of the tabernacle, the thousand years in the Apocalypse could hardly embarrass such a genius.

Sect. 61. *St. Methodius.*

We have brought our witnesses and their opponents to the middle of the third century, let us now endeavour to arrive at the reunion of their suffrages. St. Methodius, who concludes this century, presents himself as a witness in the eighth discourse of his *Festival of the ten Virgins*, where St. Thecla delivers a panegyric on virginity. After having taken for her theme the apocalyptic number 1260, which she turns and twists on all sides to weave beautiful allegories
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out of it, she concludes, I do not know how, that her female companions ought to keep their virginity; and that, if they resemble not the woman in the Apocalypse, who had a child, it is their duty to imitate her courage and her constancy, and to resist as she did, the attacks of the serpent. One sees that Methodius highly esteemed the Apocalypse, since he introduces it where there was but little necessity for it: but it was of indispensable necessity to those who believed the reign of a thousand years, and these Divines seldom lost sight of the Apocalypse.

Sect. 62. *Victorinus.*

At last behold what I have been searching for. In the index of the Bibliotheque of the Fathers, we find a commentary of Victorinus on the Apocalypse: it is the first work of this kind. There will be a preface, prolegomena, a dissertation, as well upon the Apocalypse as its author—whether it was John who composed it—at what time—on what occasion—why, and with what view—to what good a revelation so obscure, which nobody understands—answers to objections—new explanations. What a satisfaction to us! Truth is not ungrateful, it recompenses those who investigate it.

Sect. 63. I turn then to the page which the index marks. What first exhibits itself is a preface of St. Jerom, in which he is in a bad humour with one of his friends, who had

obliged him to go in search of a book, so very inconsiderable:—a bad omen. Perhaps the chagreen of being interrupted in his studies might be intermingled with his displeasure against this comment. Let us therefore proceed: “Victorinus, says Jerom, had no learning, but he was very desirous to have some: he has not even the ability to express his own ideas.” Unhappily the perusal of the commentary confirms but too well Jerom’s judgment. One does not know if it is Victorinus who comments the Apocalypse, or if it is the Apocalypse which comments Victorinus. Of preliminary dissertations we must be silent. He scarce names the apostle St. John in the body of the work: he appears not to have suspected that there were other persons of the same name, so far he dealt honestly. In fine, it was the destiny of the first commentator of the Apocalypse, to have the reputation of a Divine who had only attained mediocrity.

Sect. 64. This little accident will oblige us to collect our witnesses with care, in order that if they are not all authors of weight, they may at least form a number.

Lactantius.

I have therefore taken care not to forget Lactantius, a man undoubtedly eloquent, but one who hardly ever entered into the examination of facts. He was also a Millenarian as well

as Victorinus. For the Apocalypse, in these first ages, experienced almost the same fate with the reign of a thousand years : Lactantius, however, makes only simple allusions to some passages in this book. The reason is, that it is his custom to quote very seldom the Scripture, and very often the Sibyl, even for truths of the most capital importance in religion. " The Son of the great and supreme God, says he in the seventh chapter of his Institutes, will come to judge the living and the dead, according to the testimony of the Sibyl. But when he shall have destroyed all injustice, instituted the great judgment, and raised all the righteous who have lived from the foundation of the world, he will dwell a thousand years among men, whom he will govern with the greatest equity." And in the Epitome, which is the marrow and quintessence of his Institutes, he says, " that one cannot doubt of these truths, because they are predicted by Trismegistus, Hydaspes, and the Sibyls." This Divine is called the Christian Cicero : but when one sees Cicero make a derision of the Sibyls and the Pagan divinations, one thinks one is reading a Christian philosopher ; whereas when one beholds Lactantius paying so much honour to the Sybils, and so little to scripture, one is much tempted to take him for an heathen writer.

Sect. 65. Besides, these three Divines, Methodius, Victorinus, and Lactantius, are classed by

by St. Jerom in the rank of those who spoke with studied discretion. But let them have believed what they would, they here only deliver their own private opinion, which they had not given themselves even the trouble to examine.

Sect. 66. *Eusebius.*

Let us hear Eusebius, their contemporary, who had made more researches than any one on this subject, and who speaks of the creed of his times not like a rhetorician, but an historian, "As for the Apocalypse, says he, people to this day still doubt of its genuineness, just as the Ancients, as I have observed, had their doubts concerning it, which I have shewn in another place, by alleging their own words: and it is proper here I should exhibit the catalogue of the books of the New Testament of which I have spoken. One must then class it in the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of St. Paul, the first of St. John, and the first of St. Peter. To these may be added at last, if any person pleases, the Apocalypse of St. John; what the ancients thought of it, we will reserve to its proper place. The abovementioned books are received with general consent; the following are those which are doubted by some and received by others: the Epistle which they say was written by St. James, that of Jude, the second of Peter, the second and third of John. In fine, continues Eusebius, one must

must place in the number of books absolutely false, the Acts of St. Paul, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of St. Peter, the Letter of St. Barnabas, and the Apostolical Constitutions : add to these, if you please, the Apocalypse of St. John, which some exterminate from the books of scripture, and others place among those which are acknowledged for true." Nothing is clearer than these words of Eusebius, who in another place conjectures that the Apocalypse was written by John surnamed the Priest.

Sect. 67. Certainly the Arians cited it in the council of Nice, as we learn from St. Athanasius who was there. But it does not follow that it was received into the canon. They alleged also the book of Hermas, which certainly was not canonical. St. Athanasius himself, who hath written so much against them, does not cite it but once, as it were by virtue of reprisals only ; moderation as much the more singular, as there is no book of scripture which furnishes a greater number of weapons against these heretics.

Sect. 68. *St. Athanasius.*

There is among the works of Athanasius the fragment of a letter which contains a catalogue of the books of the Old and New Testament, at the end which is found the Apocalypse, and to it are added, as books proper to be read by catechumens, the Apostolical Constitutions and
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the Visions of Hermas. M. Basnage adds, that the author of this piece was one of those who doubted, for he is contented with saying, that the Apocalypse itself was subjoined to the other sacred books. Though this remark should not prove sufficiently solid, it is however certain, that this ancient did not speak in the name of the whole church, since he admits into his catalogue several books which Eusebius places in the number of doubtful, and among others the Epistle to the Hebrews, which was still rejected by the Latin churches.

Sect. 69. *The Synopsis.*

The famous work, entitled the *Synopsis*, or Abridgment of Scripture, which comes from an author in the time of Athanasius, if this saint be not the author of it, presents us with a catalogue which is the same as the preceding, at the end of which are these words: "There is moreover the Apocalypse of John the Divine, revised and approved as being his by the holy fathers, who were endowed with the Spirit of God." On which M. Basnage remarks again, that this author was one of those who rejected it. For he asserts positively that some ancients had regarded this work as a production of St. John: this was denoting pretty openly, continues M. Basnage, that he did not adopt the same opinion. But I beg my readers to substitute in the room of this reflection that which
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I made on the preceding article. Besides, if the author of the Synopsis, at I cannot cherish the least doubt, received the Apocalypse, he only utters the respectful echo of the judgments of those who preceded him, and his modesty chooses not that we should reckon his name in the list of authorities. He entirely acquiesces in St. Justin, St. Irenæus, and the other fathers, who were, says he, imbued with the Spirit of God, but who notwithstanding were very often mistaken. They even taught doctrines very dangerous, which it is better entirely to pass over in silence, for fear the world should accuse us of troubling the repose of the just, and searching for impieties in their sacred repositories.

Sect. 70. *Council of Laodicea.*

But what evinceth that the Apocalypse was not in the canon of scripture, is the council of Laodicea, the first that we know to have instituted a catalogue of the sacred books, held about the year 360, by thirty-two bishops of Asia, and whose decrees were ever entered in the code of the church universal. The 59th of these decrees imports, that none but the canonical books of the Old and New Testament ought to be read in the church: and the subsequent decree exhibits a list of them from Genesis to Jude. The Apocalypse here is left out, which is a circumstance rather surprising, as St. John, according to the present belief, committed it to writing

writing at the request of the Christians of Asia, and left it with them as a sacred deposit; after having lived amongst them. This very Apocalypse is not acknowledged in the place of its birth; it is banished and proscribed by those very bishops of Asia, who boasted themselves the heirs and successors of St. John, assembled at Laodicea in the midst of those seven churches to which the book was directed, and to which it even rendered so illustrious a testimony.

Sect. 71. You will think, perhaps, that such a judgment could not but be derived from a large fund of incredulity. St. Augustin, by a single sketch, will pourtray the character of these Asiatics. He says, in his note on these words of the Gospel of St. John, *that this disciple should not die*, that the people of Ephesus, who possessed a great deal of understanding, and who did not believe any thing lightly, had assured him, that St. John was not dead, but was in his grave like a man who is asleep in his bed; and that in the same manner as one sees the cloaths and coverlet rise and fall as the person asleep respire, so one could plainly perceive, at intervals, the earth of the grave rise and fall which covered the sacred body of the apostle. These people, who, as St. Augustin says, did not believe any thing lightly, were not however, as this instance shows, the greatest un-believers

believers in the world, and yet they rejected the Apocalypse!

Sect. 72. *St. Macarius.*

I know not whether the decision of the council of Laodicea reached the old St. Macarius, who passed his life in the deserts. He hath not failed to cite to his anchorets a passage in the Apocalypse. His authority has so much the more weight, as he was a saint of miracles; not such miracles as are in the legend, but miracles attested by contemporary authors. It is true, history does not tell us, that he wrought any miracles to prove the genuineness of the Apocalypse, but it records this anecdote, that an officer upon seeing Macarius, cried out, *You saints are very fortunate to have so much enjoyment in this world!*

Sect. 73. *St. Gregory Nyssene, St. Basil, &c.*

St. Gregory of Nyssa had not the gift of miracles; but then his relations and his friends wrought them, and he esteemed them as his own. This he declares himself in his harangue on the day of his ordination, immediately after having applied to the unbelievers that passage: "Would to God you were cold or hot." This is the only time that Gregory cites the Apocalypse. Neither does St. Basil, his brother, cite it, any more than Didymus and St. Ephrem, supposing we have any work of his

now

now remaining. But after all, to quote a book, as hath been often remarked, is not to declare it canonical in the name of the church. Here are only orators, who inserted into their compositions apocryphal books, and who in this, as well as in other things, made use of the privilege which rhetoric takes.

Sect. 74. *St. Cyril.*

It is better to pass to those of their contemporaries, who have expressly treated of the canon of Holy Scripture. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the antagonist of Julian the apostle, in his fourth Cataphesis enumerates the sacred books, and after having named the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the seven canonical Epistles, the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul, "All the rest, adds he, are out of the canon: we do not read them in our churches." The Apocalypse was then out of the canon; they did not read it in public. Remember it is a patriarch who assures us of this: he must be well acquainted with the opinion and practice of the churches.

Sect. 75. *St. Gregory Nazianzen.*

St. Gregory of Nazianzum details the same list of the books of the New Testament. He reckons the four Gospels, the book of the Acts, the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul, St. James, two of Peter, three of John, and concluding
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at St. Jude, says, " These are the only authentic and Divine books : all the rest ought to be ranked in the number of apocryphal.

Sect. 76. *St. Amphiloebus.*

St. Amphiloebus, bishop of Iconium, after having given a catalogue of the sacred books says, " As for the Apocalypse, it is received by some, but it is rejected by far the greatest number."

Sect. 77. *The Alogians.*

The Alogians, who could not believe that it was written by St. John, had made a critical observation : among other things they objected, that in the time of this apostle, there was not as yet a church at Thyatira. As they are only heretics, there is no great account made of what they said. The question is with regard to Epiphanius, who refutes them, though but very unsatisfactorily, and in a manner that gives them to understand, that if they would but allow him the Gospel, he would with all his heart let them do what they pleased with the Apocalypse. " If, says he, they admitted the Gospel, and rejected only the Apocalypse, one might then say, that they did this out of too much critical exactness, and from an unwillingness to receive an apocryphal book." What an amiable moderation does St. Epiphanius here discover ! he, who

who every where else was a man, of all the world, the most stiff and the farthest from making any concessions. In his estimation, if the Alogians had only rejected *such* a book as the Apocalypse was, one could only reproach them with too critical an exactness. M. Basnage thinks this is speaking very softly and complaisantly, when a Divine book is in question: but it is worse; he must have been an arrant prevaricator.

Sect. 78. *Latin authors.*

But if the Easterns and the Greeks were not very favourable to the Apocalypse, the Latins, especially those who were the farthest west, were better disposed in its regard. Among those who cite it in the fourth century, they reckon Firmicus Maternus in the twentieth chapter of his work against idolatry; Phœbades, bishop of Agen, in his treatise against the Arians; Pacian, bishop of Barcelona, in his first Epistle; the poet Prudentius, in his sixth hymn for those who are going to fall asleep; St. Hilary, in his Commentary on the Psalms, in which, if the reader will allow me a transient observation, he cannot comprehend how there should be willows on the brink of rivers, which obliges him to explain these trees *allegorically*, on which the Jews hung their musical instruments. They reckon also St. Paulinus in his 24th letter, the same who made St. Felix hide him-
self

self under a *cobweb*, that his persecutors might not be able to see him : Victorinus of Africa, a Platonic philosopher, whom St. Jerom regards with sovereign contempt, and who had not sat down to the reading of the scriptures but in the last stage of life : all Spanish authors, or those in the neighbourhood of the Garonne, except the first and second, but all without exception, far remote from the country which gave birth to the apostle.

Sect. 79. *St. Ambrose.*

The famous St. Ambrose must not be forgotten, who had a kind of conjuring stick, not to discern genuine writings, but to discover the bodies of saints and the relics of martyrs, which he distinguished from the false, by certain sensations that were excited in him, as he has taken care to inform posterity. He had also during the night time, as St. Augustin, his disciple, as well as Paulinus, relate, visions and dreams which were sent him from heaven, and which told him what every body else knew not : yet, though blessed with such aid, neither he or others do any thing but merely quote the Apocalypse ; no one gives a reason for the credit that he pays to it.

Sect. 80. *Philaster.*

Philaster, the friend of St. Ambrose, without having revelations, like him, does not fail to be much more decisive ; for he treats those as

heretics who in his time rejected the Apocalypse. From this censure it would be wrong to infer, that all the churches in a body had decreed to receive it. St. Augustin was astonished that Philaster, who possessed much less knowledge than St. Epiphanius, should yet have enumerated many more heresies than him; and upon this he makes a very sage remark, that both these authors had not the same idea of heresy, because in effect it is very difficult to give a just definition of it. The good Philaster, who thought of nothing but enlarging his Catalogue, often calls that heresy which is not so; and sometimes even opinions that are very true. Out of his special grace, he ranks in the number of heretics those who say that the Psalms are not all David's; those who assert that the number of years from the Creation is not certainly known; those who maintain that there are more than seven heavens; those who look upon earthquakes as natural effects; those who believed the stars fixed and the firmament immoveable, instead of conceiving the Deity as drawing them forth every night out of his treasury, and spreading his toilet, so to speak, which he folds up carefully the next morning. I believe that a number of honest people were not of the same opinion as Philaster, and failed not to have the reputation of orthodox.

Sect.

Sect. 81. *Sulpitius Severus.*

Neither ought one to be alarmed at a little folly of Sulpitius Severus, when he treats as fools and impious those who reject the Apocalypse. As he was a Millenarian, to deprive him of his book would be to overturn his kingdom of a thousand years, and the vexation of seeing his party diminish, which began to be no longer fashionable, without doubt must have extorted from him this fulminating sentence. The fathers have a language peculiar to themselves. Do they commend any one? He is an angel; do they blame him? He is worse even than the devil. St. Ignatius calls those murderers of Jesus Christ who fast on Sunday or on a Saturday: this ought to be candidly interpreted. St. Fulgentius declares him an enemy to the Christian faith, whoever does not damn infants that die unbaptised: this is not saying, that there were not then a number of people sufficiently charitable to save them. St. Jerom styles marriage an impurity, a debauch: I believe however that people then married. Pope Stephen treats St. Cyprian as a false Christ, who yet had on his side half the church: he styles him false apostle, deceitful worker. St. Cyprian himself decries those as unbelievers, who called in question the divinity of his dreams and visions. Ought one to be surpris'd that Severus hath taxed with folly

and impiety those who doubted of the Apocalypse? But what is farther to be remarked is, that these fools and these impious wretches were by far the the greatest number. “The majority, says Severus, *reject the Apocalypse.*”

Sect. 82. *Council of Carthage.*

In the mean time, the party that espoused the Apocalypse soon prevailed in the West, especially from the time that the Council of Carthage, held in 397, had inserted it in the catalogue of the sacred books: and though Severus has just told us that the majority rejected it, he means principally the Greeks and Easterns, who were attached to the Council of Laodicea, held near forty years before.

Sect. 83. You now see council against council on the subject of the Apocalypse: the council of Laodicea rejects it, the council of Carthage receives it: but whilst the former too much restricted the canon of scripture, the latter too much enlarged it. Together with the Apocalypse they also introduced Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, Judith, and the two books of the Maccabees.

Sect. 84. The fathers of this council have not judged it proper to inform us why they acted in this manner: it sufficed those of Laodicea, in order to make no mention of it themselves, that in their traditions, or in their archives in Ephesus, and in the seven churches,
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amongst which Laodicea was one, there was no trace nor memory of the Apocalypse, in the same manner as to reject Tobit, Judith, Ecclesiasticus, the Maccabees, it was sufficient that they did not see them in the catalogue of the Jews. To doubt of a book, it suffices that we have no proof of its genuineness; but to make it to be regarded as divine, one must have a positive reason. If this council of Carthage acts thus, it is with councils as it is with sovereigns, who do not think themselves obliged to give an account of their conduct.

Sect. 85. *St. Augustin.*

But as St. Augustin, who was then in great reputation, was the soul of the councils of Africa, and made his opinions circulate there, it will not be difficult to penetrate the reasons of the council of Carthage, in consulting this Divine himself who was present: he was ignorant of the Hebrew, and hence proceeded his great contempt for the Jewish canon: he made the authority of the sacred books depend not merely on the number, but also on the grandeur and majesty of the Christian churches which had received them; and by these criteria, which vary often according to the point of view in which they are placed, he acknowledged for canonical such and such a book. He says indeed that we ought to see, whether the apostolical churches, who received this book from

the hand of the apostles, regarded it as such ; but in short, as he knew no more of Greek than he did of Hebrew, he did not much trouble himself whether this composition originally came from the Greeks or the Jews : the moment it was contested, he inclined as usual to the Latin churches, who, on their side, paid to his merit all the justice that was due to it. Thus it is that he admits as canonical, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, the Maccabees, and the Apocalypse, books already received by the Latins, though he was not ignorant that they were rejected by the Greeks. Without once regarding its antiquity, he receives the book of Wisdom, “ because, says he, the Christians have for these several years past heard it in their churches with all the respect due to a canonical book. It creates him no difficulty that the Jews rejected the Maccabees : it is quite sufficient for him that the Western church admits them, on account of the glorious sufferings of their martyrs. There were martyrs who suffered for the truth ; one must therefore receive their histories as canonical books. Thus he reasoned, or taught the churches to reason : his practice was conformable to his principles ; he read *ex cathedra* the acts of the martyrs ; he instituted a kind of inventory of the miracles which their relics had effected ; he publicly read a lecture on the subject, even on the Lord’s day. A priest cured of the gravel,
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and afterwards raised from the dead by his shirt being carried to a martyr's shrine.—Item, two gouty persons cured, one entirely, the other relieved every time the gout seized him : moreover, one of the most obstinate of the unbelievers converted by flowers put under his bolster, which they had taken from the top of the altar : sometimes the martyr appeared to a woman to comfort her, to console her ; sometimes he would not grant the favour they requested him to bestow, and other such curiosities.

Sect. 86. I love to see these great geniuses, who are so infinitely elevated above us, descend to a level with the vulgar, and reason sometimes as badly as they. By what mode of information did Christians come to know better than the Jews, what were the genuine books of the Old Testament? And since the question now is concerning the New, how, among Christians, were the Latins better judges than the Greeks with regard to books, of which the Eastern churches were the depositaries, and which the Latins themselves did not receive but from the hands of the Greeks? This method of referring himself to his nearest neighbours, teaches us that St. Augustin lived on very good terms with them. It was without doubt the most convenient, but not the most safe, for he run the risk of making his court at the expence of truth. Was it that he sought for numbers, grandeur, and majesty of churches to determine him?

him? All this was found in the Greek churches, at least as much as in the Latin. But the Latins highly revered this father; they enjoyed his opinions on effectual grace, whilst the Greeks were heinously offended with them: now the most considerable are those always who openly declare themselves of our opinions; not that I peremptorily assert that St. Augustin was capable of yielding to this snare of self-love. Though he believed not the doctrine of sufficient grace, to which the Greeks were strongly attached, his own merit was sufficient for him without his having occasion for the applauses of the Latins. Was it then that he had examined, whether the churches, who received such and such a book from the hand of the apostles, regarded it as canonical: this was to let the Greeks gain the cause. The Apocalypse, if it was St. John's, must have been produced among them; they were the true judges of this, and St. Augustin must have abode by their decision, as in a like case he referred it to the Latins, to determine if St. Paul's Epistle to the *Romans* was in effect that apostle's.

Sect. 87. *St. Jerom.*

St. Jerom, though a better critic than St. Augustin, does not enlighten us more than the other. He was easy, as he says, in receiving the Apocalypse on the credit of the ancients who have cited it. The reader already knows
what

what one may conclude from these citations. If one party among the ancients have given credit to this book, another party hath doubted of it, as Eusebius informs us, who is more ancient than St. Jerom. He acted not amiss to pass over in silence this trifling opposition: besides, he very much extols the Apocalypse, asserting that there is not a word which does not comprise several meanings, *if we were but happy enough*, adds he, *to find them out*. The modest St. Dionysius contented himself with one single meaning which he did not understand. St. Jerom admits several, which without doubt he understands most marvellously. See here how peace may be established amongst the interpreters of the Apocalypse, if however, says our author, they are but happy enough to find them out. This is very much the language of *management* and wise œconomy, that excellent art of speaking, out of complaisance, what one does not really believe; a science which appeared so important to St. Jerom, that he thought it his duty to reduce it into a system, and to give the world both the rule and the *example* of it. He manifests a great esteem for the visions of Hermas; and one would think that he made as much account of them as of the Apocalypse, if unfortunately a single expression had not just escaped him, that it was a foolish story. In his preface to Daniel, he ranks in the number of fables the Story of Sufanna,

fanna, and the Song of the Three Children, with the Story of Bel and the Dragon. But when they reproached him for his unholy temerity, he replied very coolly, *I did not then speak what I really thought.* One day he was most severely curried by angels, for having such a fondness for profane authors: *It was not a vain dream,* says he; *my shoulders are at this instant black and blue with them.* Some persons taking it heinously that after such an accident, he should relapse again into his old sin of reading these authors, "It is very pleasant truly, says he, to object against me my own *dreams.*" He had published as his own, a thought quite new on the dispute of St. Paul with St. Peter: it was only, as he pretends, a dispute by way of *management*, at the very time these two apostles were never better friends: but they had privately agreed among themselves, for the highest utility of the Gospel, that St. Peter, in order to gain the Jews, should make a pretence of approving circumcision; and that St. Paul, on account of the Gentiles, should practice a little roguery on his side, in order that they might *together* bring all the world to Jesus Christ by this holy hypocrisy*. True it is, that St. Augustin, who had a great deal of gravity, complained that this was making the apostles act a

* St. Jerom Comment. in Epist. ad Galat.

farce :

farce: But St. Jerom, who looked upon him as a scholar who had the assurance to teach his master, rids himself of him in a jocular manner. After having said that his custom * was to copy indiscriminately all sorts of authorities, and that he did *not* remember if such a thought was his or some other person's, he adds, "It therefore became your wisdom, before you had blamed my explication, to turn over especially the Greek authors, and to see if the thing is not found there, in order that you might place it to my own account." This task was no easy one to poor St. Augustin, to send him in this manner to an infinite number of books, for the most part in Greek, which he did not understand. What would it then be with regard to us, who have not all those works, to which St. Jerom referred Augustin? Ought one to be surprised at this rate with the numberless contradictions which are found in the writings of this father? His was a soul that was always fluctuating between two extremities, without being ever able to seize on a fixed point. To return to the Apocalypse; you have seen the judgment which he passed on it; take care it do not escape you; for in his catalogue of illustrious men, he says that St. Dionysius composed a very exact critical work on the Apocalypse:

* Epist. lxxxix. ad Augustinum.

now you know the nature of this critical work ; it robbed this book of its true author, and aimed at nothing less than destroying its authority.

Sect. 88. Since then St. Jerom, the wisest of the Latin fathers, will not tell us plainly what he thinks, it will be of more importance to hear him as a witness of the creed of his times, of which he will give us a better account, as it is this properly that we are investigating. "The Greek churches, says he, do not receive the Apocalypse ;" and this prejudice was then so very much in vogue, that he calls it the *custom of his age*. No one could be better acquainted with it than himself : he had run over all the churches in the world ; he had even frequented the Greek churches more than the Latin ; but when he speaks only of the Greek churches as having rejected the Apocalypse, it is publicly declaring, methinks, that the Latin churches received it.

Sect. 89. *Innocent the First.*

In effect, Innocent, the first of the name, bishop of Rome, who opens the fifth century, places it in his catalogue of sacred books, but along with Tobit, Judith, the Maccabees, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus. This conformity with the council of Carthage, held some years before, would make me think, that every pope, as Innocent was, was only an eccho of this council, which, after having canonized the Apocalypse, greatly contributed to circulate it

in the West. If this is not so, both these two will have drawn from one common source, which could only be the most general opinion and practice of the churches.

Sect. 90. *The Apocalypse gains credit gradually.*

Thus it was that the Apocalypse, in proportion as it was propagated from one country and one century to another, acquired a powerful protection, capable of resisting all the combined power of opposition. During the three first centuries, there were only some individuals who militated against it: Greeks and Latins, all were indiscriminately engaged in the fray. But when after the action the troops come to rally, the Greeks, especially after the council of Laodicea, gradually united to reject it, as the Latins, after the council of Carthage, combined to espouse it. From that time, one sees the Christian world fall into a kind of schism, and divide themselves into two opposite squadrons. The Apocalypse, exiled from its own native country, sought an asylum among strangers, and one might apply to it that proverb, *A prophet has no honour in his own country.*

Sect. 91. Such is the ordinary process of religious disputes: they begin with individuals, and from individuals they pass to the public. Parties form and support themselves, till at last the strongest prevail, and the weaker are obliged to submit to their jurisdiction.

Sect.

Sect. 92. *St. Cyril.*

Things remained a long time in a perfect equality; but how great soever the vigilance be of two parties who are watching one another, there will always be some deserter that will pass from one camp to another: such was St. Cyril, whose memory will be for ever fragrant and dear to the devotees of the Virgin, for having had the address and wisdom of dignifying her with the title of the Mother of God. If this father, who was a man of intrigue and a great caballer, had been agitated with the like religious ardour in favour of the Apocalypse, he would infallibly in the end have effected its reception among the Greeks. On a certain urgent occasion, he suffered even in his own person, witness the courage he displayed at the head of a mob which rose to drive the Jews out of Alexandria, in which however they were protected by the government. Cyril, in this action, was hurt with a blow from a stone, and his life would have been in imminent danger if his guards had not come to succour him.

Sect. 93. *The false Dionysius.*

About this time, an obscure Greek dignified himself with the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, in order to give his fictions the weight and age of truth. Though he had kind intentions towards the Apocalypse, and it were not
his

his fault if his countrymen did not believe it to be a Divine book, the mystery remained concealed for several years, before it arrived at its maturity: however, as the supposition of its being genuine shewed ignorance and rudeness, it was not at first relished in its native country; but it found a more propitious climate in the West: popes, councils, sovereigns received it with great respect; and the Latin world admired the profound erudition of the pretended Areopagite: for the Greeks had a very inventive mind, and the Latins one much more credulous. Nothing was ever better suited to each other—the Greeks forged writings, and the Latins vended them.

Sect. 94. But in our age all these impostors have been miserably shipwrecked, and especially the false Dionysius hath been so completely unmasked, that he cannot appear without exposing himself to insults. He explains the Gospel of St. John and the Apocalypse, which were hardly composed during the life-time of the real Dionysius. A judge of the Areopagus, as he was, must have arrived at man's estate about the 54 year of Christ; which was the æra of his conversion: he then could not have seen the Apocalypse but in his old age; and the impostor, who studied to palm himself on the world, represents himself as young at the time that he wrote. He quotes the Apocalypse as a canonical book, concerning which there was no

doubt. It is Dupin who says this ; and yet in the first ages of the church, people had very great doubts whether it was canonical or not.

Sect. 95. *Junilius.*

Not merely did they doubt of it during the five first centuries, but they had their scruples also in the sixth, at which we are now arrived : it is Junilius, a Latin writer, who assures us of it. "The Easterns, says he, very much question the genuineness of the Apocalypse." This is rather surprising : the vision of the reign of a thousand years was now fallen, it could no longer be a motive of opposition, and yet doubts still subsisted.

¶ Sect. 96. Junilius himself, bishop of Africa as he was, deserted the council of Carthage to follow the standard of the Easterns *. He arranges all the books of scripture under different classes, according to the nature of the subjects. After having enumerated the historical books, he comes to the prophetic ; of these he reckons seventeen, which he distinctly names ; but in this catalogue he places not the Apocalypse : he classes it in another place amongst the books of a middling authority, that is, according to him, that hold a middle station between books certainly canonical and books certainly false.

* Junil. lib. i. cap. 4—7.

Sect. 97. This author, who is very observant of method, investigates the means by which we may be assured of the Divinity of the sacred books. Without attending at all to the testimony of tradition, or to the judgment of the church, he makes their authority depend on the characters of Divinity which are found in them, on the truth of the doctrine, on the admirable harmony of the precepts, the noble simplicity, and the purity with which they are written, or on the accomplishment of the predictions, if the book is prophetic. To these marks he adds the character of the authors — common men, who entertain the most worthy ideas of the Deity ; — people without education, and of low extraction, who teach however a most exalted doctrine : — people without art, without study, who discover truths unknown to the ablest philosophers, and who could not have been taught themselves but by the Holy Spirit : — the success of the doctrine contained in these books, its establishment in spite of the powerful opposition of its adversaries ; — in fine, the miracles which supported and seconded it : “ and if at present these miracles are no more, it is, says Junilius, that there is no occasion for them, because the establishment of this doctrine is a miracle more than sufficient to prove it.”

Sect. 98. Observe here, that there never was an age that carried their credulity farther than

this. They talked of nothing but miracles; and a man must have had a very sound head not to catch a contagion which passed from the multitude to the divines.

Sect. 99. I confess that I have been surprised to see an author reason with such good sense, and at the same time to find him so little known and still less read. One hardly ever finds him but in the enormous Bibliotheca of the fathers, where he lies overwhelmed with an infinity of authors, that ought never to have been rescued from oblivion. It is true, that with his principles, which are ultimately the same as those of the Protestants, he is very zealous for contracting the canon of the scripture; and people will be displeased with him for retrenching the book of Chronicles, those of Job, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. He goes so far as to represent five of the Epistles of the New Testament as doubtful, without reckoning the Apocalypse. I think, after having studied this author, that if he were to return to the world, he would address the Protestant divines, nearly in the following manner:

Sect. 100. "I have always wished, gentlemen, to be united in friendship with men as rational as you are, who make a profession of examining things by your own judgment, and believing nothing blindly and implicitly. You do not adopt the miracles of your times, nor did I adopt

I adopt the miracles of that century in which I lived. I affected to cite neither fathers nor councils, and I know you regard them as little as I did. Your principles especially are so agreeable to my own, in regard to the authority of scripture, that we have reason to applaud ourselves that they have been drawn from the common source of good sense, which is not deceived, and cannot deceive. There is no probability that you ever borrowed them from me: I question much whether I have the honour to be known to any of you, gentlemen. Stepping lately into a bookseller's, to know what figure I made in the world, I asked for the little volume of Junilius, and I suffered for my curiosity: nobody knew it, though there were people there whom I took for divines, for they were dressed like you, gentlemen, who now do me the honour of being my hearers: but I easily console myself for the obscurity into which I am fallen, very happy to find myself live once again in you. I had rather that truth should reign of itself, than if it groaned under the weight of my authority. In fine, that I may avoid the fault with which the ancients are reproached, of forgetting their subject in order to run into digressions; I come to the point intended, gentlemen, which is to recall your attention to what I have asserted in my book, that faith ought to be founded on reason; and that to believe reasonably, one ought clearly

to discern the laws which are Divine. I see nothing but uncertainty and contradiction in fathers and councils, when they want to determine the number of canonical books. The most ancient doctors vary so much, that if one were to abide by the judgment of each of them, one should see in the canon a vast miscellany of apocryphal writings, which, far from being dictated by the Holy Spirit, have not even a spark of common sense to enlighten them: and as for councils, I assure you, on the faith of an ancient, that they are nothing less than what they are reputed to be. Gregory Nazianzen had never seen one, as he declares, that in the end had done any good. My friend Primasus gave me a thorough disgust against them. He was deputed by our churches to the fifth general council, and strove, but ineffectually, to establish peace in an assembly, where the spirit of a court had much more influence than the Spirit of God: besides, what side are we to join? The council of Laodicea was in direct opposition to our council of Carthage: it rejected several books which the other regarded as canonical: no other way was left me than to have recourse to these books themselves, to search in them themselves the proofs of their truth, a method, which Protestant divines, whom I now have the honour of addressing, judge to be the safest and best: the result of my examination was such, that I thought

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I discerned three kinds of books, the true, false, and the doubtful. The agreement of the first with natural reason, an air of simplicity and sincerity, which charmed me whilst I read them, caused me to receive them as true, in order to be the rule of my faith and practice: the contrariety of the second to these books, which I have just taken for my guides, joined to a spirit of fable and affectation, obliged me to reject them as false; and of this number are those, which you style apocryphal, except Ecclesiasticus, which appeared to me to contain good principles, and excellent exhortations to virtue. At last I classed in the number of doubtful books, those which seemed to me neither true nor false: they were in number fourteen, which you now hold in the rank of canonical books. Here therefore it is, gentlemen, that I shall have occasion for your indulgence: perhaps the dread I was in of taking the word of men for the word of God, proceeded less from a wise circumspection than an unenlightened diffidence; all that I can say is, that it appeared to me that I searched for truth with the same sincerity and uprightness that you do yourselves: We cannot acknowledge a book to be Divine, but in proportion to the characters of Divinity which appear obvious to our minds in them: we both agree as to this principle. As then you have banished from the canon of your ancestors those books which seemed to you desti-

tute of these characters ; I have made the same attempt with respect to diverse books, to which you now give credit ; and I really durst not admit them because I discovered not in them any traces of the finger of God : we are perfectly agreed in the principle, but not always in the application. I have as yet only spoken of the sacred books in general, I will conclude with a reflection on the prophetical books. They have a character that is peculiar to them, and which depends on the truth of the things predicted : the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old Testament evinced to me their Divinity ; but I had not the same success in the examination of the Apocalypse : on one hand I saw it very much contested, on the other I saw nothing appear which served to terminate the controversy ; I therefore laid it aside, as it were in a state of sequestration, till the event verify it. I learn, gentlemen, that you have this book in high estimation, and that this is not without reason : you regard it as a *lettre de cachet*, dispatched from the cabinet above, investing you with full power to seize the body of the pope, impeached in form, and proved to be antichrist. In my time nothing like this was ever suspected : it was a sealed letter to us, and the glory of opening and decyphering it was reserved to your age. I hope, gentlemen, that you will initiate me into your mysteries ; you will find in me a docile disposition, and

and though you profess not to take the ancients for your masters, I shall esteem it a great honour to learn something from the moderns. I beg of heaven to grant you always additional knowledge, and me the grace to profit by it."

Sect. 101. *St. Andrew of Cæsarea.*

While Junilius is *searching* in our writers for the *key* of the Apocalypse, we will pass to a Greek of reputation, St. Andrew of Cæsarea, who, without losing his time in reasoning, embraces the Apocalypse the moment he sees it, contested or not, no matter which. Some ancients, on which he had casually stumbled, had examined the thing for him, he wanted to know no more about it; and if a contrary wind had chanced to have blown him to another region, he would have reposed his faith in it with the same honesty. They are people who are not formed for the fatigue of thinking; and while others torment themselves and perhaps at the end of their laborious researches find only doubts and perplexities, these put themselves in the easy situation of *believing*, and no beings on earth are happier: truth, like some people's fortune, comes to them when they are asleep, or falls on them by inheritance. "It is useless, says Andrew in his preface to the Apocalypse, to examine the authority of this book, for it is certain that our fathers, Gregory the Theologian, Cyril of Alexandria, and before them Papias,

Papias, Irenæus, Methodius, and Hippolytus, assert in more than one place of their writings, that it is a Divine book, and worthy of credit.

Sect. 102. There are here but two false citations. Papias hath not spoken a word of the Apocalypse; but what deceived St. Andrew was, that in truth Papias was a Millenarian: he had drawn his opinion of the reign of a thousand years from an unwritten tradition, and not from the Apocalypse. This opinion, by the way, is treated by St. Jerom as a Jewish fable: as to Gregory Nazianzen, or the Theologian, it is false that he ever called the Apocalypse a Divine book; on the contrary, he formally excluded it from the canon of scripture. See then how the creed of St. Andrew is founded; for if unluckily he had read the ancients with more care, the seeds of incredulity would have been sown in his soul. It is useless, he would then have said, to pay any attention to the authority of this book, for it is certain that our fathers, Gregory the Theologian, Cyril of Jerusalem, and together with them, Caius, Eusebius, and several others, assert, in more than one place of their writings, that it is an apocryphal and contested book. But St. Andrew had a commentary quite ready on the Apocalypse, the first work of the kind among the Greeks; and he was not so lost to all natural affection, as to stifle a child that was to do so much honour to
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its father. He hath not failed, according to the custom of the ancients, to extol his original. He declares that the Holy Spirit hath here lavished, with greater exuberance than on any other book, the riches of the mystical and allegorical sense: in truth, the comment is very despicable: the author reckoned much on the assistance of St. John, whom he invokes at the beginning, but it does not appear that his prayer was ever heard. He had composed his work at the request of several persons, and the number of believers must have been now augmented among the Greeks, since they denied a comment on the Apocalypse: the work was relished: Aretas, a long time afterwards, made one like it, or rather, took care to copy his predecessor: and as St. Andrew had implicitly taken the word of some of the ancients, Aretas might surely take St. Andrew's.

Sect. 103. *St. Maximus.*

Thus was the Apocalypse introduced gradually, especially from the time that the false Dionysius the Areopagite, who classed it in the number of the sacred books, began to pass among the Greeks for the true Dionysius: St. Maximus, in the seventh century, impressed great importance on this author: they did not fail to believe him; and soon a great number of other people were determined by his authority; for as soon as opinion is once acknowledged,

ledged, it becomes, of all authorities, the greatest and strongest.

Sect. 104. After this we need give ourselves no farther trouble as to the rest; though from so slight and trifling a beginning, yet assure yourself every thing will go on prosperously. Figure to yourself a little piece of snow, which the least breath of wind hath loosened from the summit of a mountain, a ball is formed, and by rolling becomes so enormous a mass, that it bears down every thing that it meets.

Sect. 105. Such is the omnipotence of current opinion: let it support itself and roll for some time, it will soon have the whole world in its train. "I have seen, said one, the birth of various reports in my time, and though they were stifled as soon as born, we did not fail to foresee the course they would have taken, if they had lived their time: for it is only finding the end of the thread, one winds off as much as one pleases, and there is a greater remoteness from nothing to the smallest atom, than there is from this atom to the largest thing in the world. Private opinion often constitutes public opinion, and public opinion in its turn constitutes private opinion: thus this great building advances, accumulating and forming itself from hand to hand, in such a manner, that the most distant spectator is better acquainted with it than the nearest, and the last more convinced
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than the first. Let a certain Divine, Justin Martyr for example, advance a thing without thinking, it is not of less value for that, let it not despair, it is sure to make its fortune: by only throwing the die at random, it meets the favourable point, gains the multitude, and engrosses the public belief, witness the statue of Simon Magus. This public faith, raised at first from the system of an individual, becomes afterwards itself to the individual a new degree of credibility, and the fact now is much better believed than before. See here the circle of human opinions, not merely of false, but also of true! Whence comes this? It is that truth, however immutable, cannot become opinion, that it does not pass through the hands of men, and every thing that passes through this channel is subject to such revolutions.

Sect. 106. *The fourth council of Toledo.*

But if the Apocalypse made conquests among the Greeks, it also found in the West; where its empire was better established, Divines, who refused to submit to it; whether this was a new sect, or whether it was the remainder of the ancient unbelievers abovementioned: for though from the time of pope Innocent it had been confirmed in 494 by pope Gelasus, these sorts of decrees did not constitute the general law of the western churches. There were priests, who, to the great scandal of good souls, despised this
book,

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book, and would not read it in public. The disorder went so far, that the fourth council of Toledo, held in 633, and the first council of Europe that hath explained its sentiments on this head, thought it its duty to remedy it, and institute the following canon, fitter than the best reasons to make an impresson on the mind of the refractory: "The authority of several councils, saith the 27th canon, and the synodical decrees of the most holy bishops of Rome import, that the Apocalypse was written by St. John the Evangelist, and that it must be received among the divinely inspired books." There are wanting here a few lines, where mention was made of those Divines, who vouchsafe not, says the council, to preach it in the church of God. If any one then for the future, refuse to receive it, or to preach it in the church, at the time of mass, from Easter to Whitsunday, he shall incur the sentence of excommunication.*

Sect. 107. The greatest part of the western Divines, who had given this book credit in the

* I will here relate a fact which will serve to shew the spirit of this council of Toledo. One of its canons expressly says, that one ought to use force to retain those among Christians, whom one has made to enter into the church by force. The reason it gives is, the fear there is that these relapsing may render the faith contemptible. One sees that force was then a law of the church, and that Spain especially was a territory excellently cultivated and prepared to receive the inquisition. *Editor's note.*

fourth century, the æra of its general reception among the Latins, were Spaniards, or those in the neighbourhood of the Pyrenees, as hath been before remarked. Behold here a council of Spain, which signalizeth itself by its zeal, and which comes from the extremity of the globe to give testimony to the genuineness of the Apocalypse, whilst it had as yet so little credit among the Greeks, who ought to have been the first in acknowledging it: and one may with truth declare, that the remotest testimony is better acquainted with the state of things than the nearest, and the last informed more persuaded than the first.

Sect. 108. We gather from this council, that they were accustomed to read it in public from Easter to Whitsunday:—perhaps the council itself was the author of this establishment, which did not obtain any where but in Spain. But what is of the greatest import to remark is, that in receiving it among the divine books, it founds its decisions on the decrees of popes and the authorities of councils: by these popes he means undoubtedly Innocent I. and Gelasus. I am very much afraid that the pretended decree of Gelasus is not rather the production of an impostor. It was never cited till after the year 840, and the reasons of some critics appear to me rather strong to convict it of being supposititious: but one does not comprehend why the fathers of Toledo give themselves

selves the honour of several councils. One has never heard speak but of one council of Carthage; and if there were some other which approved the Apocalypse, they did wrong not to name them: for it is not the time now to believe them on their word; experience of what is past renders us a little more distrustful. "It is a method, says M. Basnage, which is but too common with councils, as well as with particular Divines, to amplify their arguments, and detail them in the plural number; persuaded that they will have time to dazzle and confound their opponents before they are called upon to make an enumeration of them." Let the council of Toledo have used fraud, or let it have acted sincerely, which I rather think, it is however certain, that the method which it employed was of wonderful service to the Apocalypse: the menaces of excommunication perfectly enlightened the understandings, and from that time one sees not among the Latins the smallest trace of opposition.

Sect. 109. This was not the case among the Greeks, who, for want of a remedy as speedy and efficacious as this, did not emerge from their old prejudices but very slowly. The way of persuasion is much longer; and St. Maximus, who employed it to convert them from their error, notwithstanding the esteem he had acquired among them, made no great progress. We have already seen, that the false
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Dionysius often quotes the Revelation. St. Maximus, who indefatigably studied this author as if he were the genuine Dionysius, says in a note: *Observe, St. Dionysius receives the Apocalypse as the work of St. John the Evangelist.* This information was intended for the Greeks, who rejected it; and in order to convince them the more effectually, he gives them to understand that nobody could be so well informed of this as St. Dionysius. “You will see by the tenth letter, adds he, that the Divine Evangelist was well known to St. Dionysius during his residence in the isle of Patmos, where he had the vision of the Apocalypse.” This pretended letter of St. Dionysius, of which Maximus speaks, was written to St. John, to predict to him the end of his exile at Patmos, and his return to Ephesus: thus at the same time that the apostle had extraordinary visions, by means of which he penetrated into the remotest futurity, he had however occasion to be informed that his banishment would soon be at an end. The fiction was but ill contrived; however it must have produced its intended effect upon the minds of the Greeks, the greatest part of whom then took the false Dionysius for an oracle;—and truly he had all the obscurity of one.

Sect. 110. *The general council of Constantinople.*

I thought at first that the council of Constantinople, assembled in the palace of the em-

peror, in the year 692, would put an end to this dispute ; and I am not the only one who have herein been deceived : they have groundlessly imagined, that it had drawn out a catalogue of the sacred books : nothing like it is found in the acts we now have of it ; but this error arose from its having approved several councils, which did in effect institute these sorts of catalogues. This agreement is undoubtedly insufficient, and by wanting to approve too much, this council approves nothing : it receives the council of Carthage, but at the same time it receives the council of Laodicea ; it receives both the one and the other without reserve, without restriction, that is, by approving the council of Carthage, it admits the Apocalypse ; and by approving the council of Laodicea, it rejects the Apocalypse. It is the peculiar privilege of councils then to draw up contradictory articles ; but for fear that such a privilege should in future happen to prescribe to them, they have taken the precaution to make a public act of it, and to renew it from time to time, as this council of Constantinople here does. The assembly was composed of four patriarchs, of two hundred and twenty bishops, and of a legate, who represented the western church : however, there was nobody found among them who could remind them of the contradiction ; and if through misfortune, as it might very well happen, no mention had been made but only

only of the council of Carthage, who is there but would believe that a general council had adopted the Apocalypse? Alas, how many histories does the world believe, on appearances less strong! So true it is, that in regard of facts, even at the time that we follow the most exact rules, we are often determined to pronounce wrong judgments.

Sect. III. We are, therefore, you see as little advanced as before, unless one would say, that the council of Constantinople is rather contrary than favourable to the Apocalypse, because, besides the council of Laodicea, it moreover approves the eighty-five apostolical canons, the last of which refuted it; and with regard to the council of Carthage, it would not be impossible that, in the East, they might then have had unfaithful translations of it, or mutilated copies, in which the Apocalypse might not be found. Nothing was more common than these sorts of falsification; and without going in search of further examples, behold here two remarkable ones, which obtrude themselves. The council of Carthage forbids ecclesiastics to dress their hair and cut their beards; this canon was afterwards inserted in the decretals, but the article of the beard was left out; — Why? — because the priests had then begun to shave. The second example is, that the council of Laodicea had directed to read in the churches only the canonical books,

the catalogue of which it immediately after rehearſes. Dionyſius, the ſmall Latin author of the ſixth century, hath rightly inſerted in his collection of canons this prohibition to read the Apocrypha, but he hath omitted the catalogue, without doubt becauſe he did not ſee the Apocalyſe in it, nor ſeveral other books which the Latins received. The Greeks in their turn treated the Latins in the ſame manner, and they accuſe them of having corrupted and mutilated the weſtern councils. Thus in their tranſlation of the council of Carthage, perhaps they re-trenched the Apocalyſe, and the other books which the Greek church rejected. Falsification, begun of ancient date, acquired by this means a kind of title, and the fathers of Conſtantinople, who did not look ſo near, never intended to derogate from their council of Laodicea by approving that of Carthage: but this is only a conjecture, which I leave to the judgment of the critics.

Sect. 112. *John of Damascus. Nicephorus.*

The following century, which is the eighth, does not enlighten us the more: here one only ſees John of Damascus, who claſſes the Apocalyſe in the number of ſacred books. But though this divine had a great authority among the Greeks, and his example hath not a little contributed to determine their future judgment, it was not however ſtill the ſentiment of the
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Greek church : one may be convinced of it by the *Stichometria* of Nicephorus, who was at the head of this church about the beginning of the ninth century. This patriarch of Constantino-ple, here distinguishes three sorts of books in the Old and New Testament, some which the church receives as canonical, and the Apocalypse is not found here; others which are doubtful and contested; and others, lastly, which are false and apocryphal. The Apocalypse was inserted in the second class; for Anastasius the Librarian, who lived a little while after, and who translated this piece of Nicephorus, reckons among the contested books the Apocalypse of St. John, the Apocalypse of St. Peter, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

Sect. 113. Afterwards came those times of ignorance, so sterile in writers, those iron ages of literature, so fit to *digest* all the absurdities which the preceding ages had but just *tasted*, and in which the grossest imposture walked boldly abroad by favour of a credulity that knew no bounds. One here loses sight of the Apocalypse through default of monuments, and it is impossible to trace it distinctly : all that one can presume with reason is, that by insensible degrees it got as far as the door, and at last, taking advantage of a very dark night, it entered quietly, and without noise, into the canon of the

the Greek church, to hold a place there among divinely inspired writings.

Sect. 114. *The triumph of the Apocalypse.*

Thus it was, that the rays of Divinity, which were hardly perceptible to the preceding centuries, struck with irresistible splendour the eyes of the whole Christian world, and in ages of the thickest darkness, they saw with greater clearness than ever they did before. Ancient doubt was construed into ignorance, and the new creed into most certain information. What the fathers assembled at Laodicea knew nothing of, and what they had not been able to find in the archives, nor in the tradition of the churches of Asia, which were the depositories of the writings of St. John, came to the knowledge of their posterity, who were better instructed in these things. It was on these new lights, that at last, at the end of a thousand years, they held the Apocalypse to be abundantly authenticated, to be the work of this apostle, and consequently worthy to be received as a canonical book. One cannot mark the precise time, nor the circumstances of this reception: what is certain is, that it was about the tenth century, very quietly, and if I may so express it, quite in the Huguenot way, not by any decree of a council, nor by any of those modes which, in order to be more ostentatious, are not always the more honourable to truth.

Sect. 115. From that time, there does not appear the least contest on this subject, neither among the Greeks, nor among the Latins : for one ought to reckon as nothing a MS. of five hundred years old, which Dr. Burnet had seen, and which contained, with figures, the visions of the Apocalypse joined to *Æsop's Fables*; whence it is concluded, that the author of this MS. believed one no more than the other : be it as it may, one might contrast it with the story of the emperor Otho II. who, out of devotion, wore an habit, on which he had ordered all the Apocalypse to be embroidered. This certainly is as good as the picture of that unknown person, who was professedly a libertine. If ever book was indebted for some lustre to its commentators, most certainly it is not the Apocalypse : I speak of the wholetime that preceded the Reformation; besides their being so inconsiderable in number, they are such pitiful commentators, that one dares not attribute them to those whose names they bear; such are those of St. Ambrose, St. Anselm, St. Thomas, and St. Bernard.

Sect. 116. But from the time of the great revolution that happened in the sixteenth century, a new interest of religion hath put the minds of men in motion, and greater application than ever hath been employed to investigate all the meaning of the Apocalypse. From this æra, yielded up as a prey to all sorts of commentators,

mentators, great and small, it hath proved the subject of disputes and controversies between the Catholics and Lutherans, between the Calvinists and the English.

Sect. 117. As in the opinion of every one this book contains the destiny of the church; every sect in particular has not failed to make an application of it to themselves, and often to the exclusion of others. The English find here the revolutions of Great Britain; the Lutherans, the troubles of Germany; and the French refugees, what happened to them in France. In fine, each church boasts of finding itself here, according to the rank that it thinks it holds in the plan of Providence, and which you may be sure is always the first place. There is only the Catholic church which hath circumscribed it within the limits of the three first centuries, during which it maintains, that every thing was accomplished; as if it were afraid, lest descending lower, it should see Antichrist in the person of its metropolitan. 24 OC 62

F I N I S.

P R O P O S A L S
For PUBLISHING, by SUBSCRIPTION,
A
T R A N S L A T I O N,
From the GREEK, into ENGLISH BLANK VERSE,
O F T H E
T R A G E D I E S of EURIPIDES;
W I T H
NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.
By EDWARD HARWOOD, D. D.

C O N D I T I O N S.

- I. This Work will form Two Volumes in Quarto;
and shall be printed in an elegant and correct Manner. The first Volume will be ready for the Press next Autumn.
- II. The Price to Subscribers will be Two Guineas;
One Guinea to be paid on the Delivery of the first Volume, the other on Delivery of the second, in Sheets.
- III. The first Volume shall be put to the Press when Four Hundred Copies are subscribed for. If this Number be not obtained, as the Publication of this Work must be attended with great Expence, the Undertaking will be abandoned. Dr. Harwood therefore requests those who are disposed to honour this Work with their Patronage, that they will give in their Names as early as possible.

SUBSCRIPTIONS will be taken in by the AUTHOR, at his House in Great Russel-street, Bloomsbury; by T. BECKET, and T. CADELL, in the Strand; T. DAVIES, Russel-street, Covent-Garden; J. ROBSON, New Bond-street; T. PAYNE, Mews-Gate; G. ROBINSON, Pater-noster-Row; FLETCHER and PRINCE, Oxford; and MERRILL and WOODYER, Cambridge.

Prefixed to this TRANSLATION, will be several DISSERTATIONS, in which the following Subjects will be discussed.

- I. Of the Greek Tragedy.
- II. Of the Grecian Stage.
- III. Of the Rise, Progress, Perfection, and Declension of Dramatic Composition among the Greeks.
- IV. Of the three Greek Tragedians, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.
- V. Of the Iambic, and its singularly happy Adaptation to Dramatic Narrative.
- VI. Of the Chorus.
- VII. Of the Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode.
- VIII. That the Greek Tragedies were Operas, with musical Accompaniments.
- IX. The Life of Euripides, and a Comparison instituted between him and Sophocles.
- X. Of the Editions, Commentators, and Translators of Euripides.

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EURIPIDES hath long been universally esteemed the most elegant and pathetic of the Greek Tragedians. He was the Disciple and Friend of SOCRATES, who visited the Theatre when his plays were represented, and assisted him, it is said, in the Composition of them. The pure Morality every where interspersed in these Dramas is certainly worthy of that Divine Philosopher. Nineteen of the Tragedies of Euripides have descended to our Time, in a more perfect and correct State than the writings of his Contemporaries; but they have never been translated into our Language. Euripides, for many Years, hath been my favourite Author. About ten Years ago, at my leisure Hours, I amused myself with translating some of the best of his Compositions, and writing Notes on them. I have now finished a Version of nine of the Tragedies, and illustrated them with Notes. The Remainder will be executed, if these Proposals meet with Encouragement.

December 20th, 1773,
Great Russell-Street,
Bloomsbury, London.

EDWARD HARWOOD.

